


## SHANKAR DEV

Shankaravara could run faster than all his friends and swim across the Brahmaputra when it was in spate. But when his grandmother scolded him for not paying attention to his books, he took her words seriously. Named Shankar Dev by his guru, the young man fulfilled all his duties as a student and a householder before embarking on a voyage of self-discovery. A voyage which led to his starting the Vaishnava movement in Assam.


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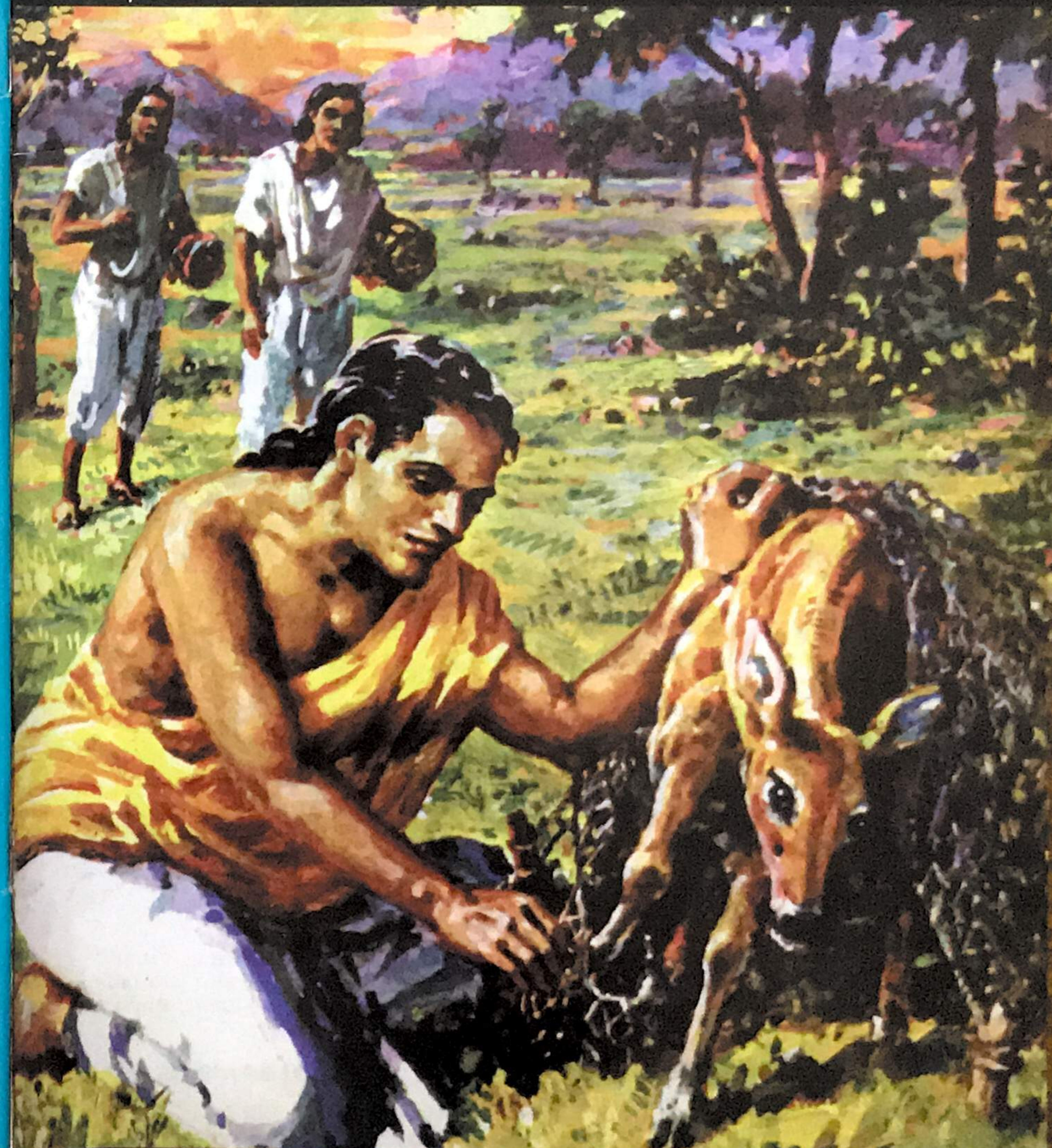
VISIONARIES



# SHANKAR DEV

PREACHING THE RELIGION OF LOVE

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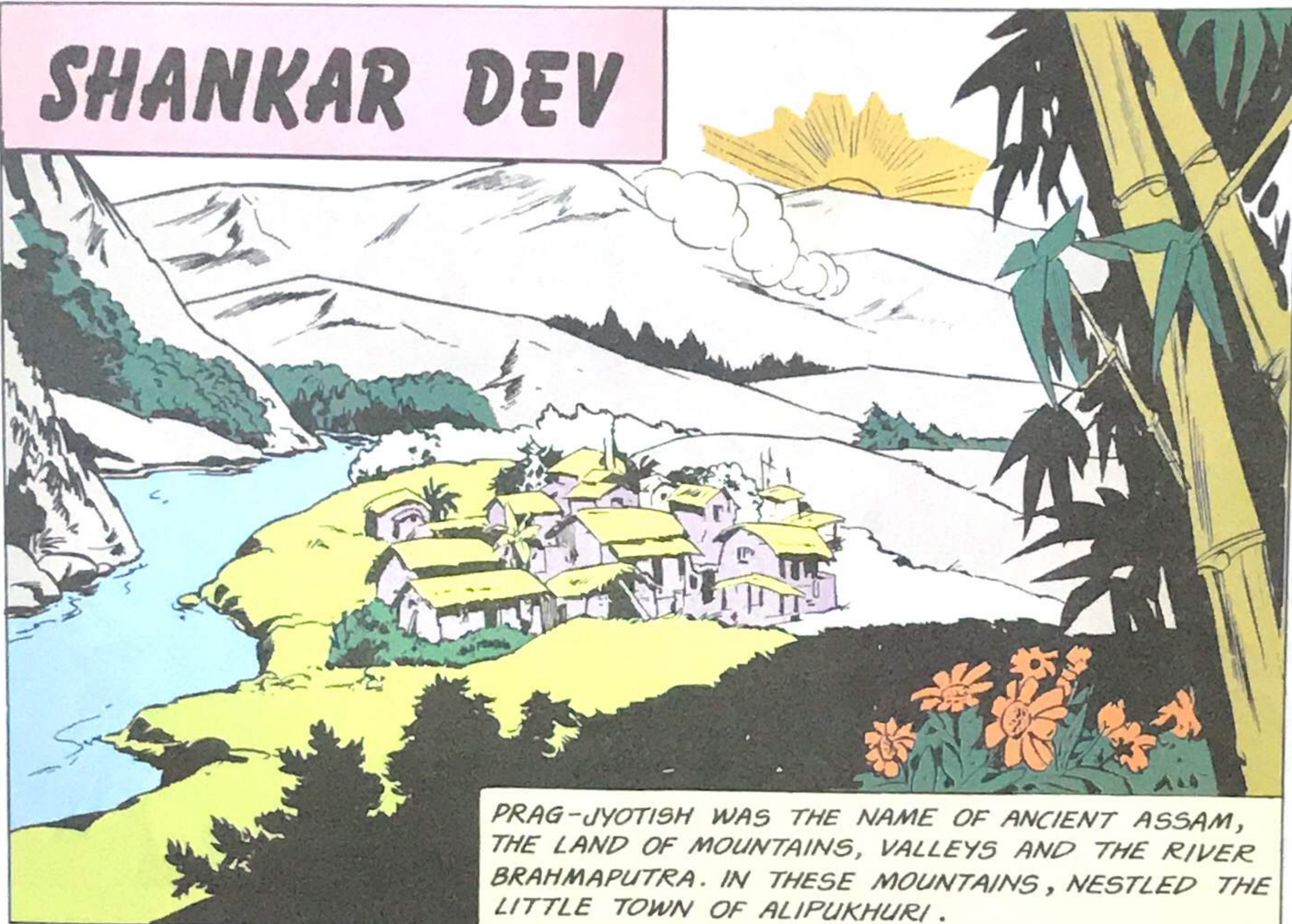
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# SHANKAR DEV



PRAG-JYOTISH WAS THE NAME OF ANCIENT ASSAM, THE LAND OF MOUNTAINS, VALLEYS AND THE RIVER BRAHMAPUTRA. IN THESE MOUNTAINS, NESTLED THE LITTLE TOWN OF ALIPUKHURI.

IN ALIPUKHURI, IN THE YEAR 1449, A SON WAS BORN TO THE SHIROMANI\* OF BHUYANS, OR CHIEFTAINS.

LORD SHIVA HAS GRANTED US OUR WISH AT LAST.

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL CHILD HE IS, SATYA-SANDHA! LET US CALL HIM SHANKARAVARA†.



SHANTARAM, THE FAMILY PRIEST WAS CALLED IN.

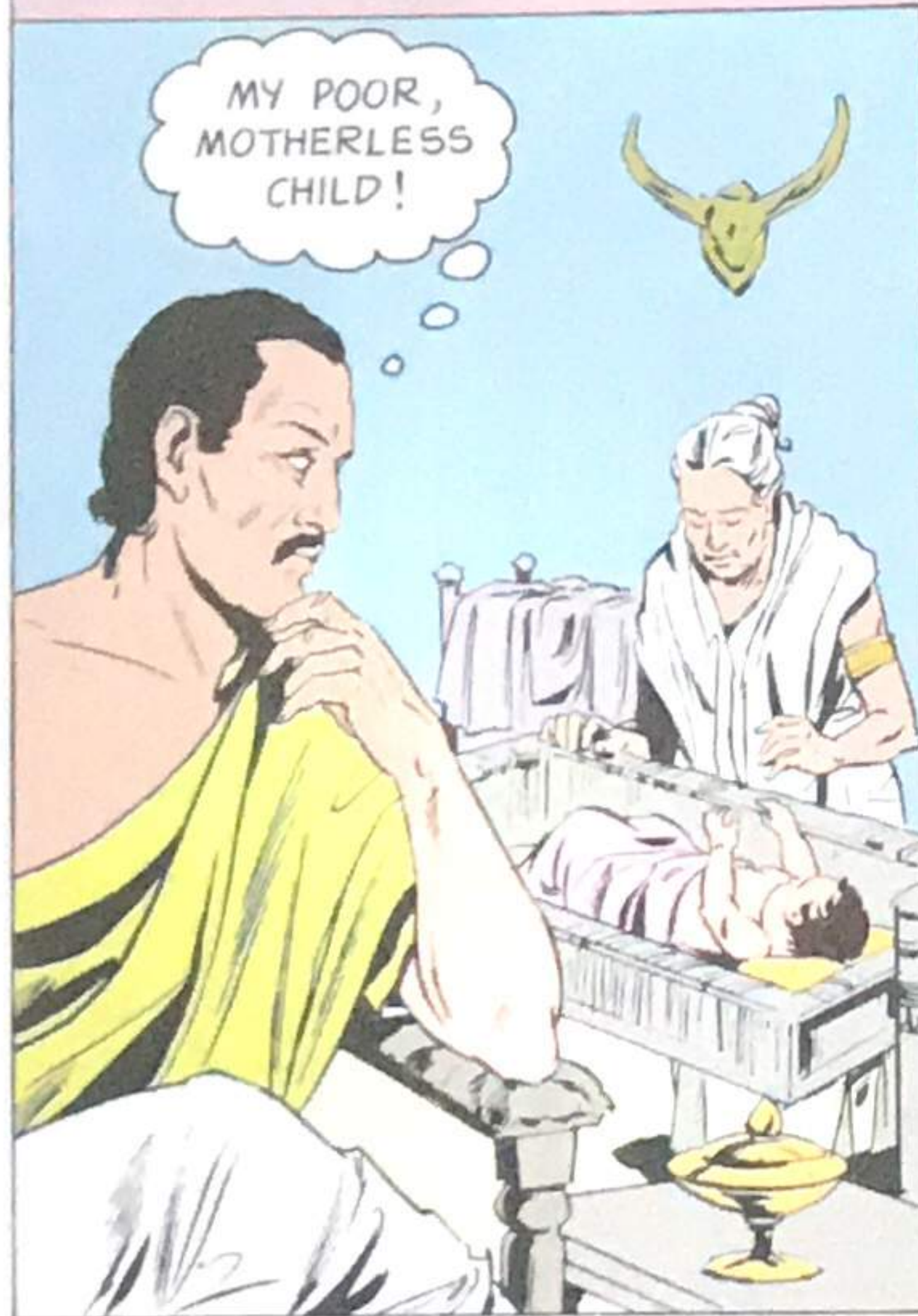
SHIROMANI KUSUMAVARA, YOUR SON'S HOROSCOPE FORETELLS A GREAT FUTURE FOR HIM.



\* OVERLORD † VARA IS A BOON, AND SHANKARA IS ANOTHER NAME FOR SHIVA



A FEW DAYS LATER, SATYASANDHA DIED.

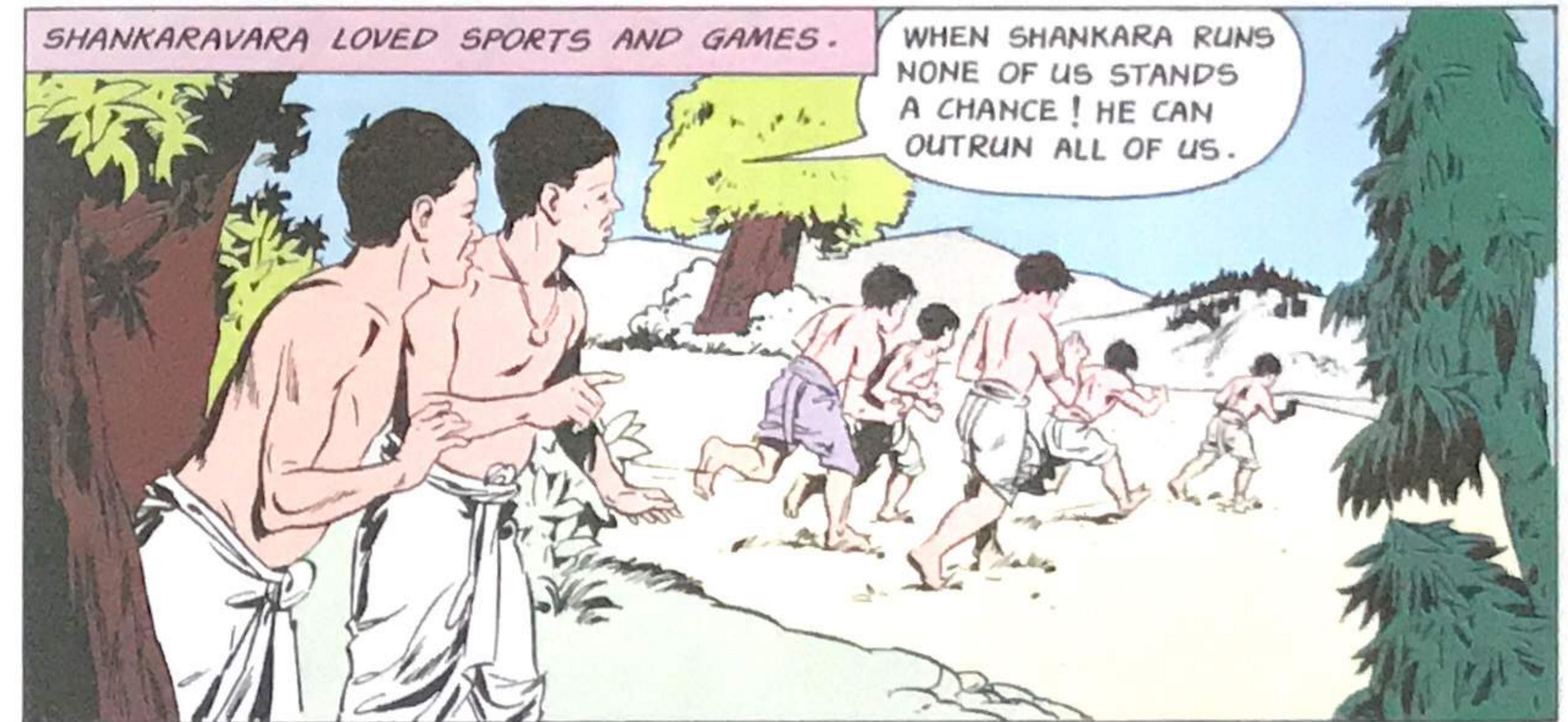


NOT LONG AFTER THAT, KUSUMAVARA TOO DIED. BUT UNDER THE LOVING CARE OF KHERSUTI, HIS GRANDMOTHER, SHANKARAVARA GREW UP INTO A HEALTHY, INTELLIGENT BOY.

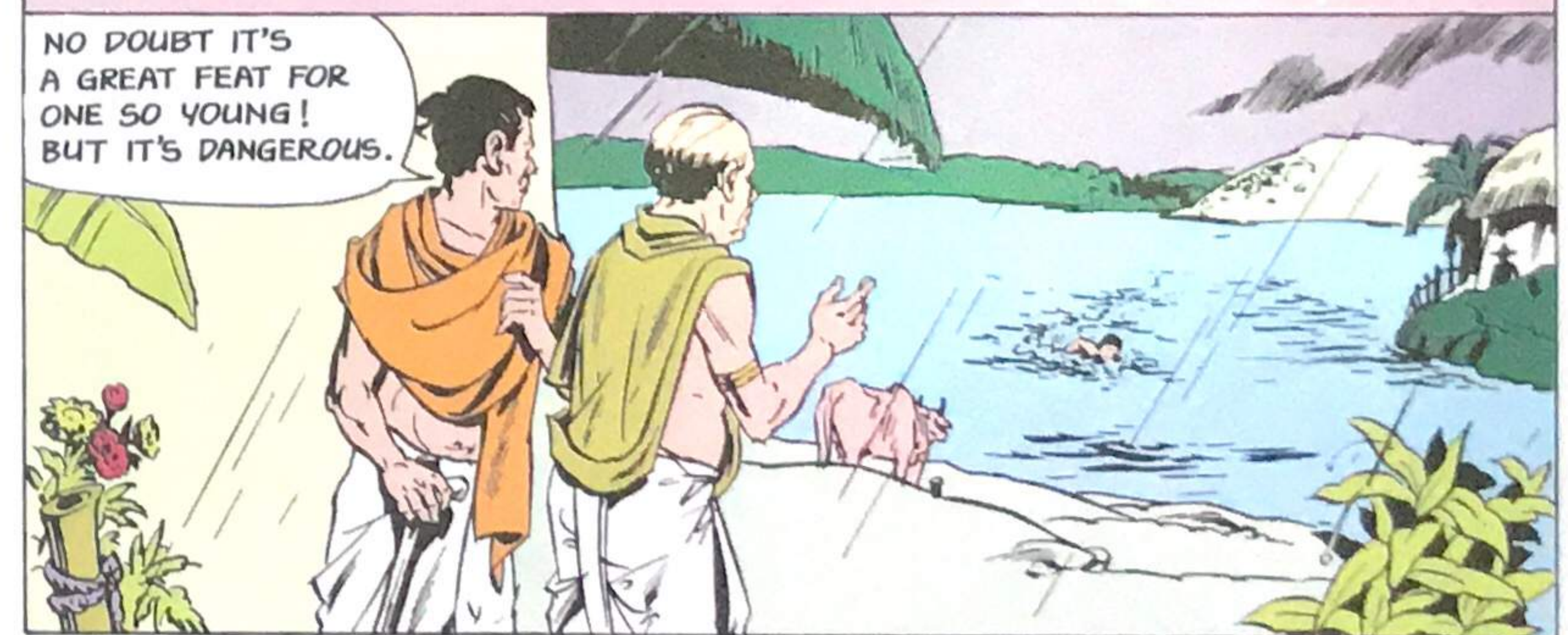


\* GRANDMOTHER

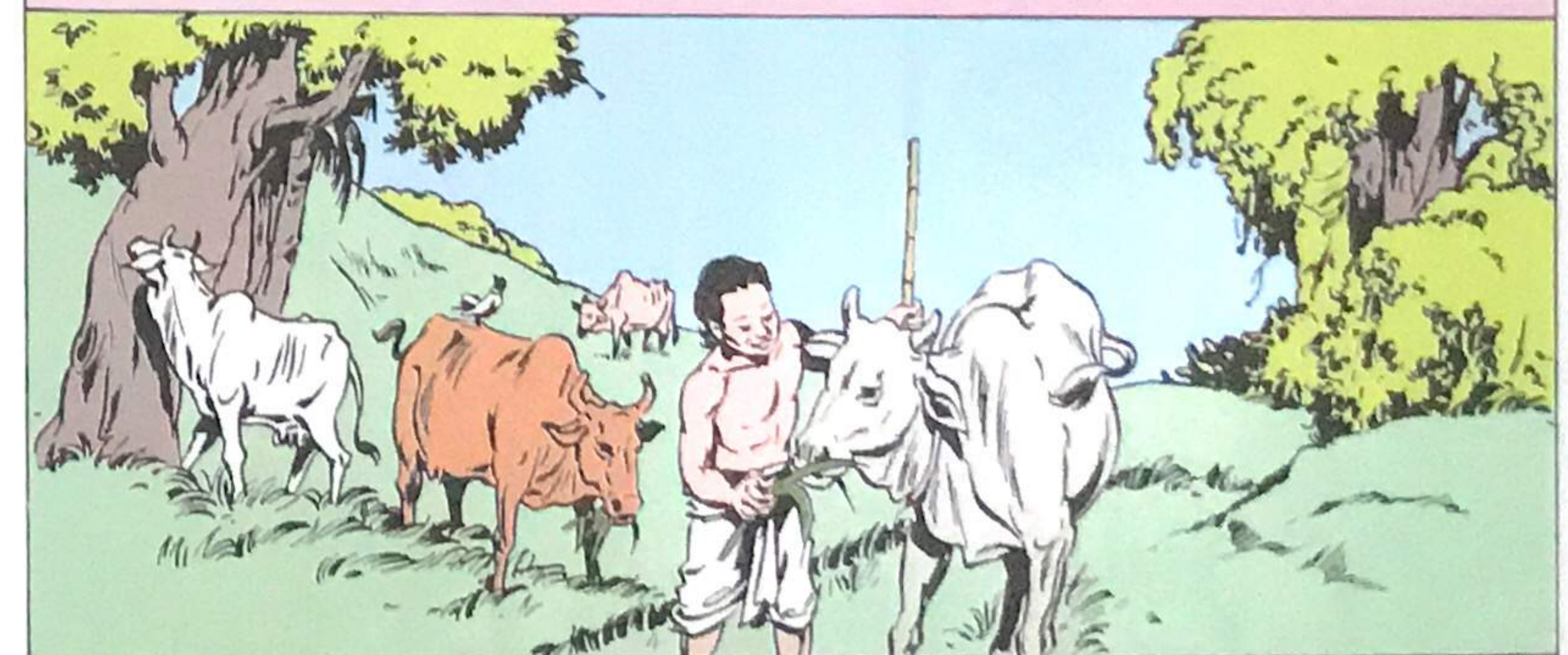
SHANKARAVARA LOVED SPORTS AND GAMES.



HE COULD SWIM ACROSS THE MIGHTY BRAHMAPUTRA, EVEN WHEN IT WAS IN SPATE.

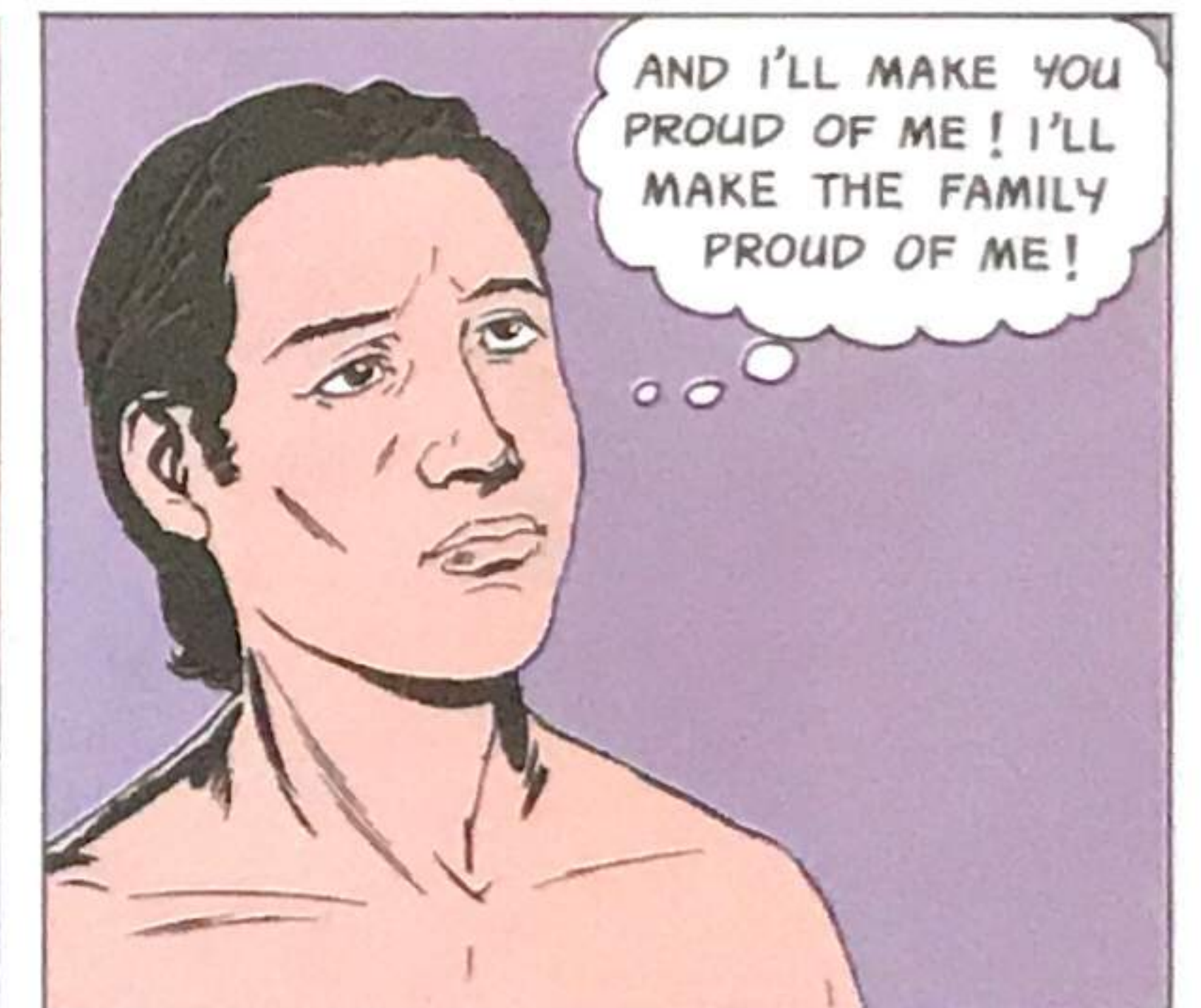
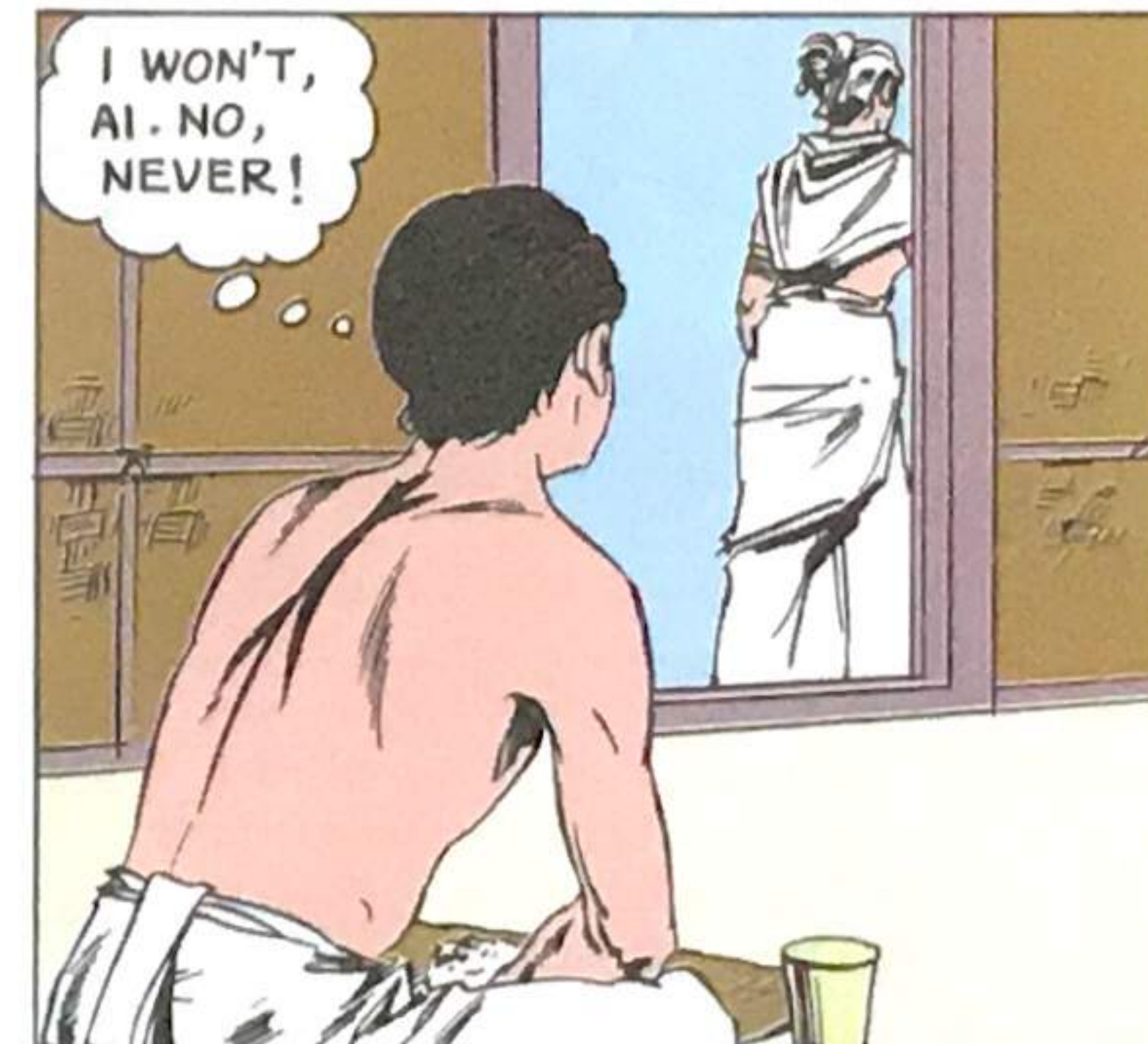
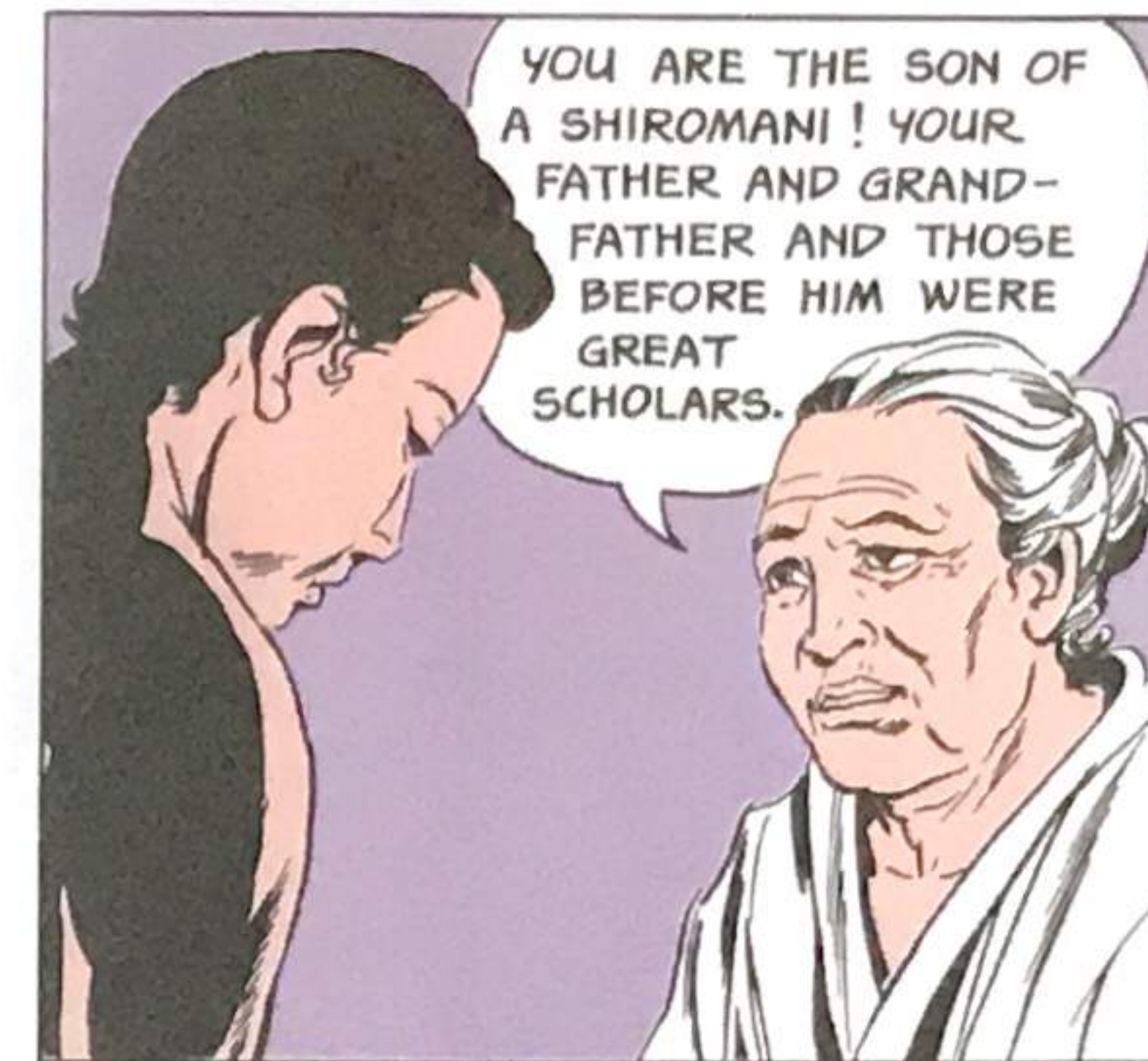
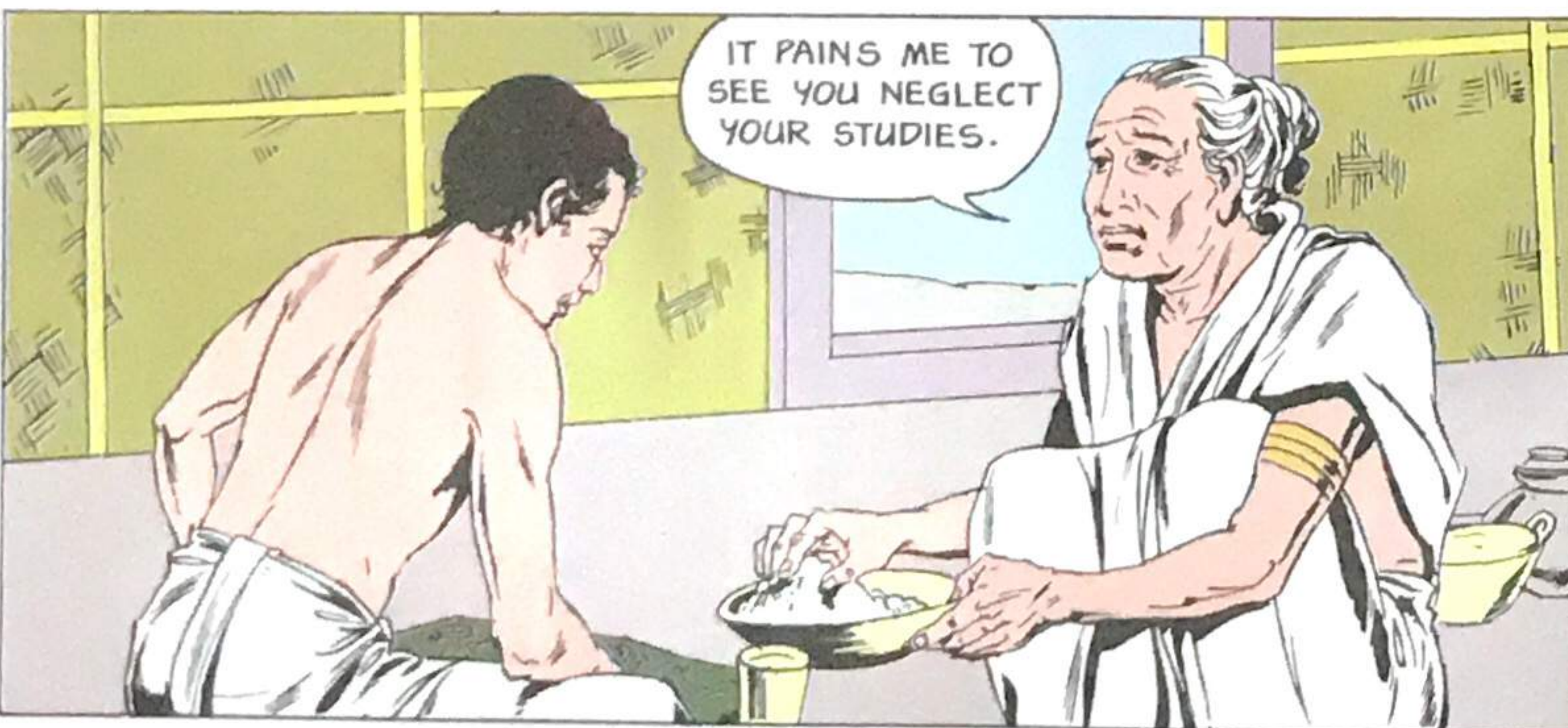
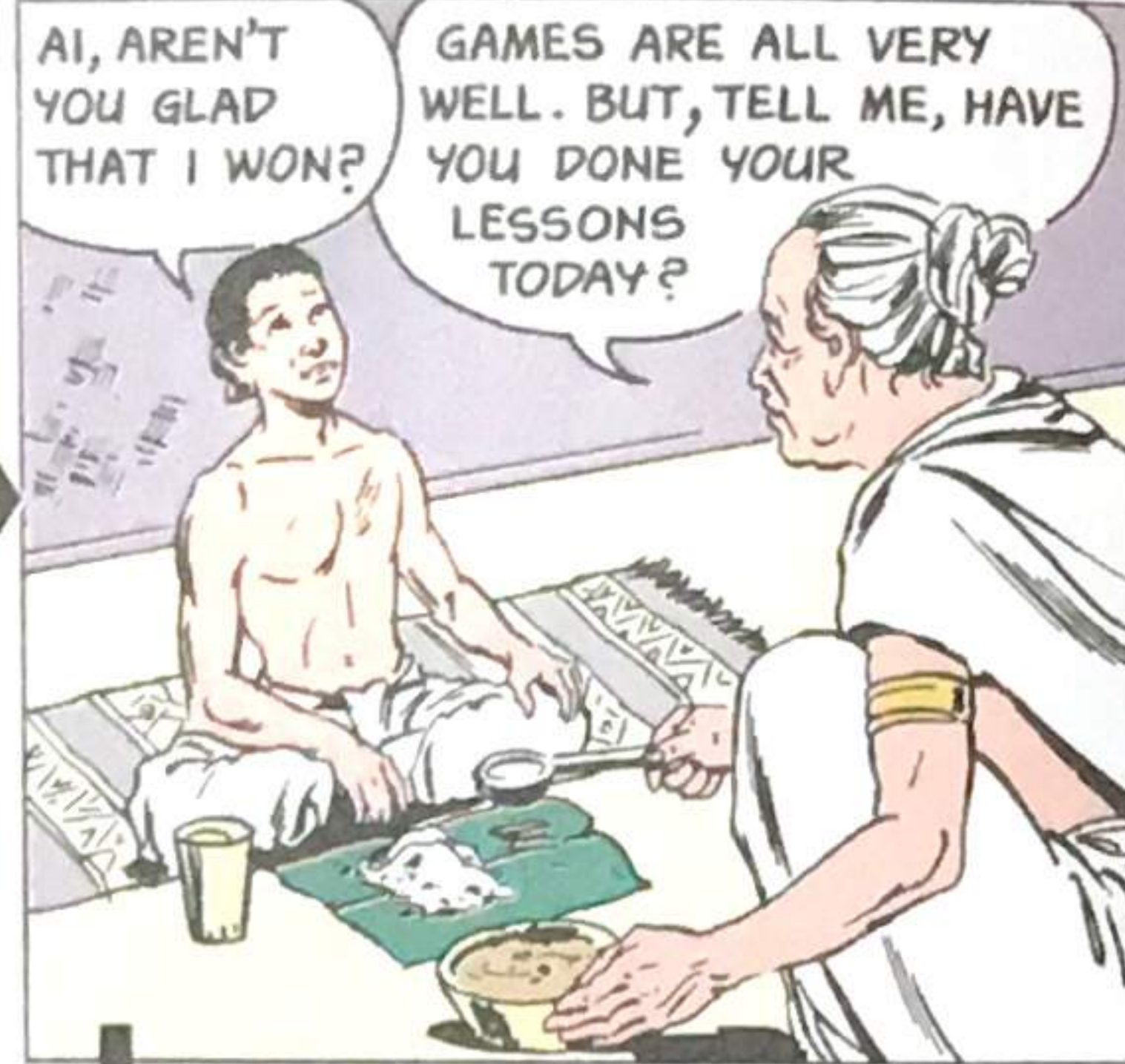


HIS GREATEST LOVE HOWEVER WAS TO TEND COWS AND TAKE THEM OUT TO GRAZE.

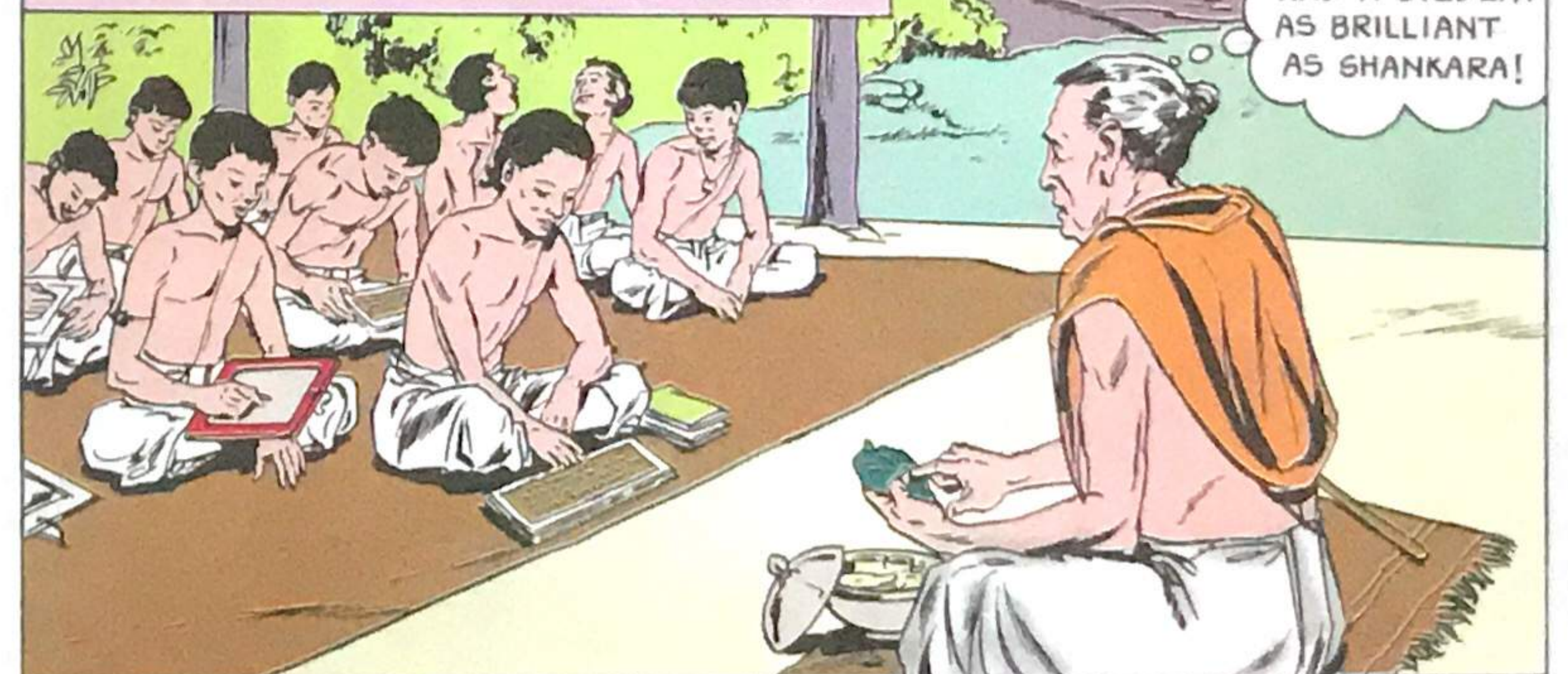




SHANKARAVARA WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD WHEN ONE DAY—

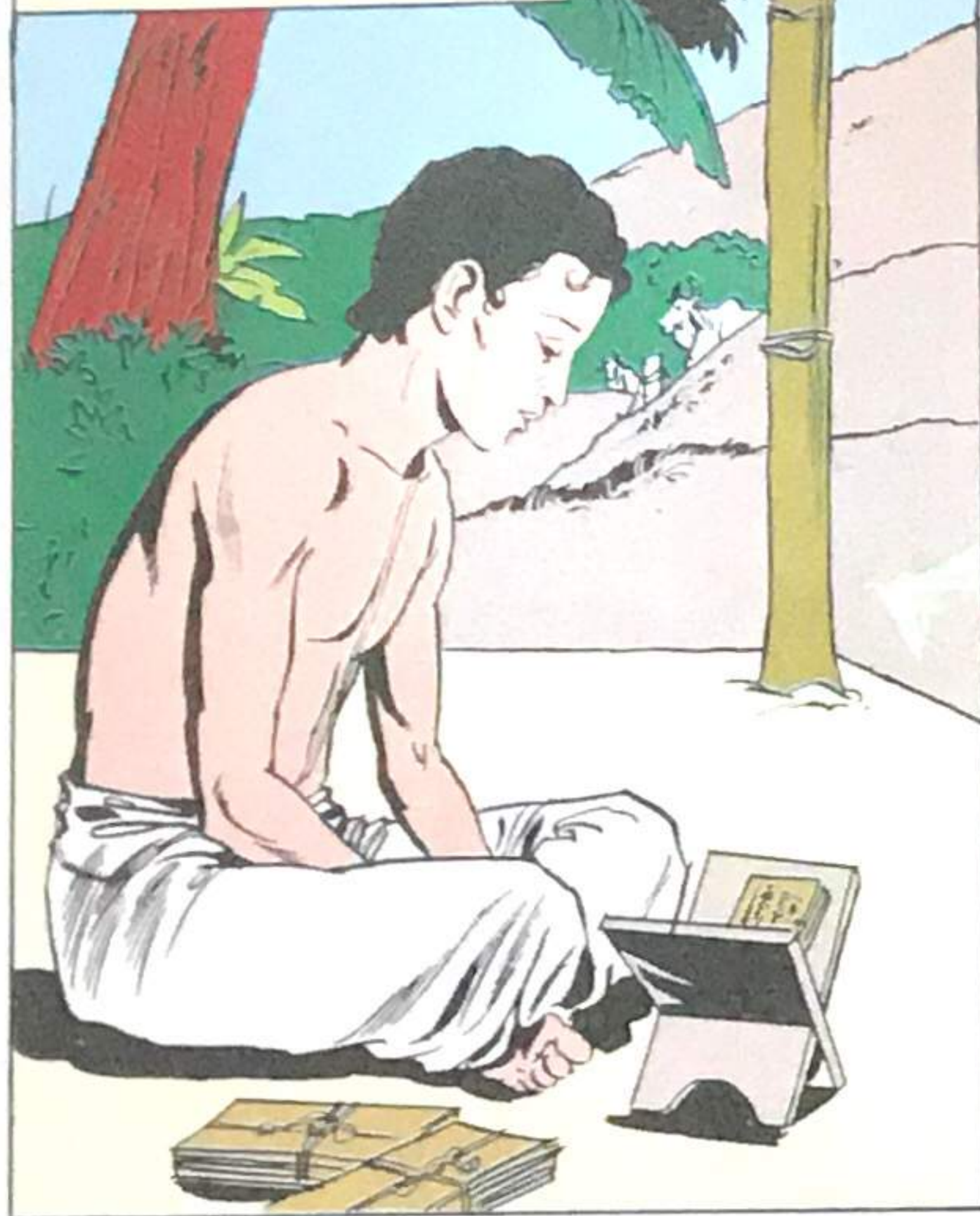


SHANKARA JOINED THE VILLAGE SCHOOL, CONDUCTED BY MAHENDRA KANDALI. HERE TOO, HE WAS EASILY THE BEST.



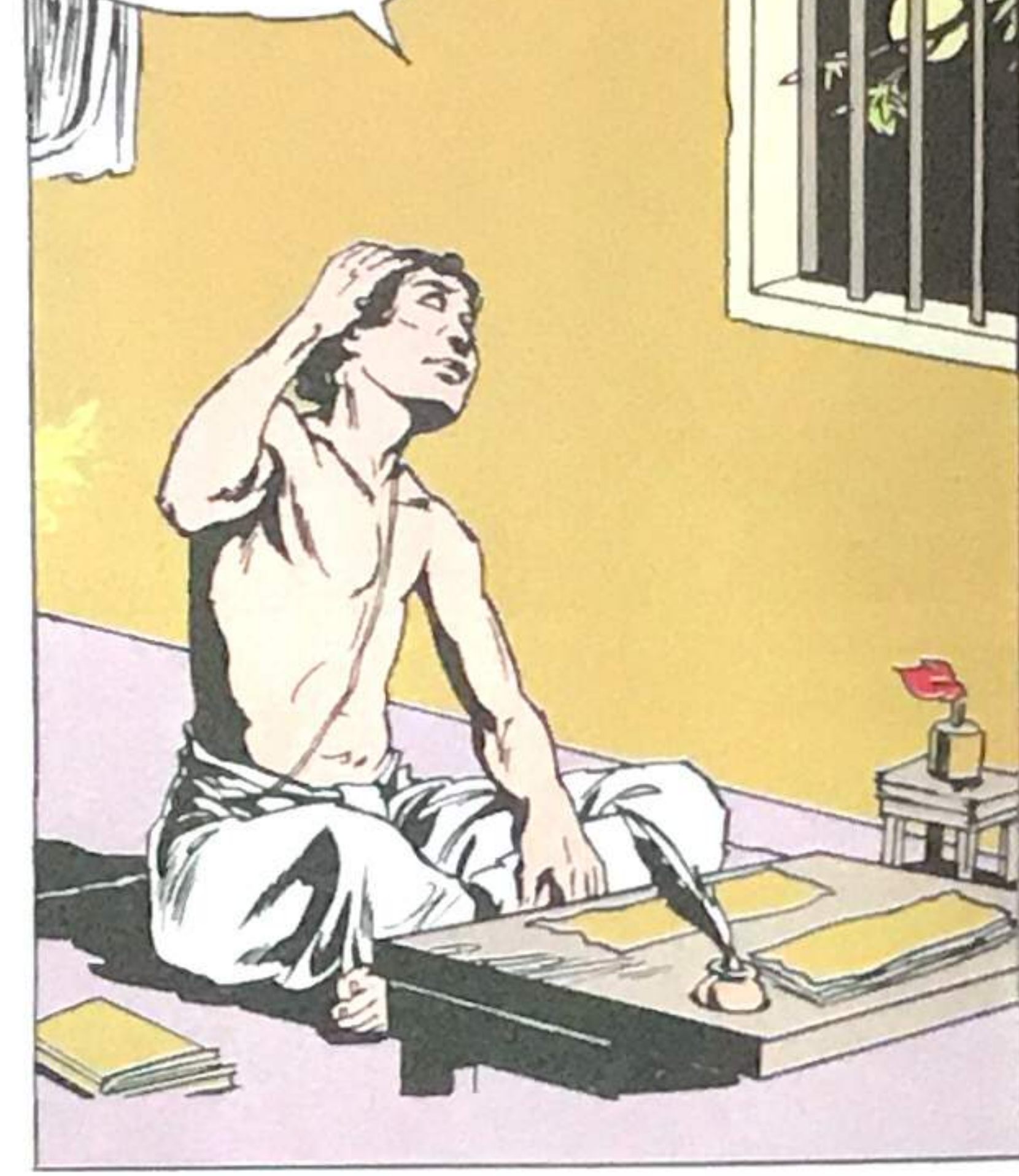


SHANKARA'S PASTIMES NOW TOOK A SCHOLARLY TURN. HE READ ASSAMESE POETRY ...



... AND COMPOSED HIS OWN POEMS IN SIMPLE SANSKRIT.

KARATALA KAMALA,  
KAMALADALA  
NAYANA ...

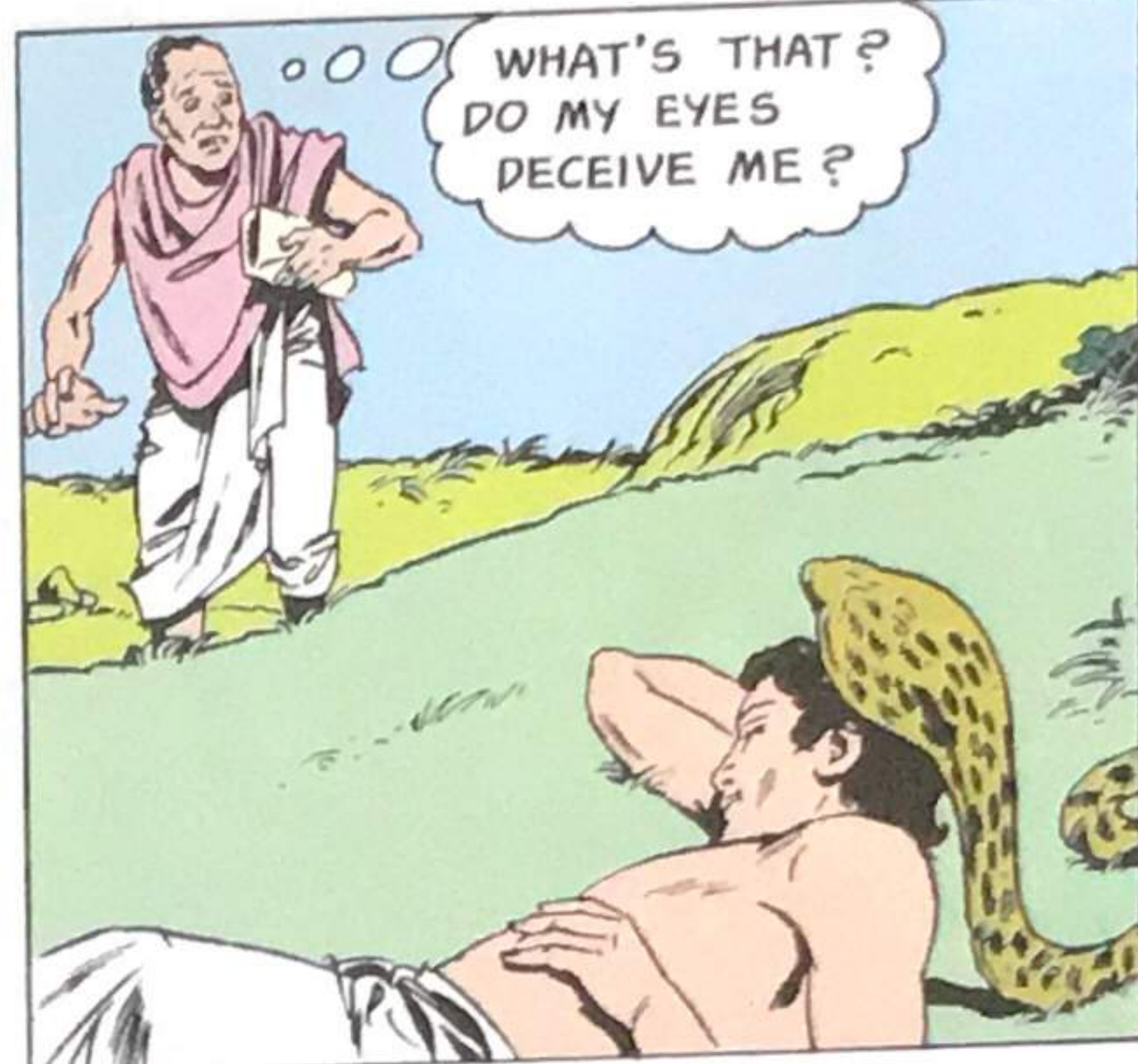
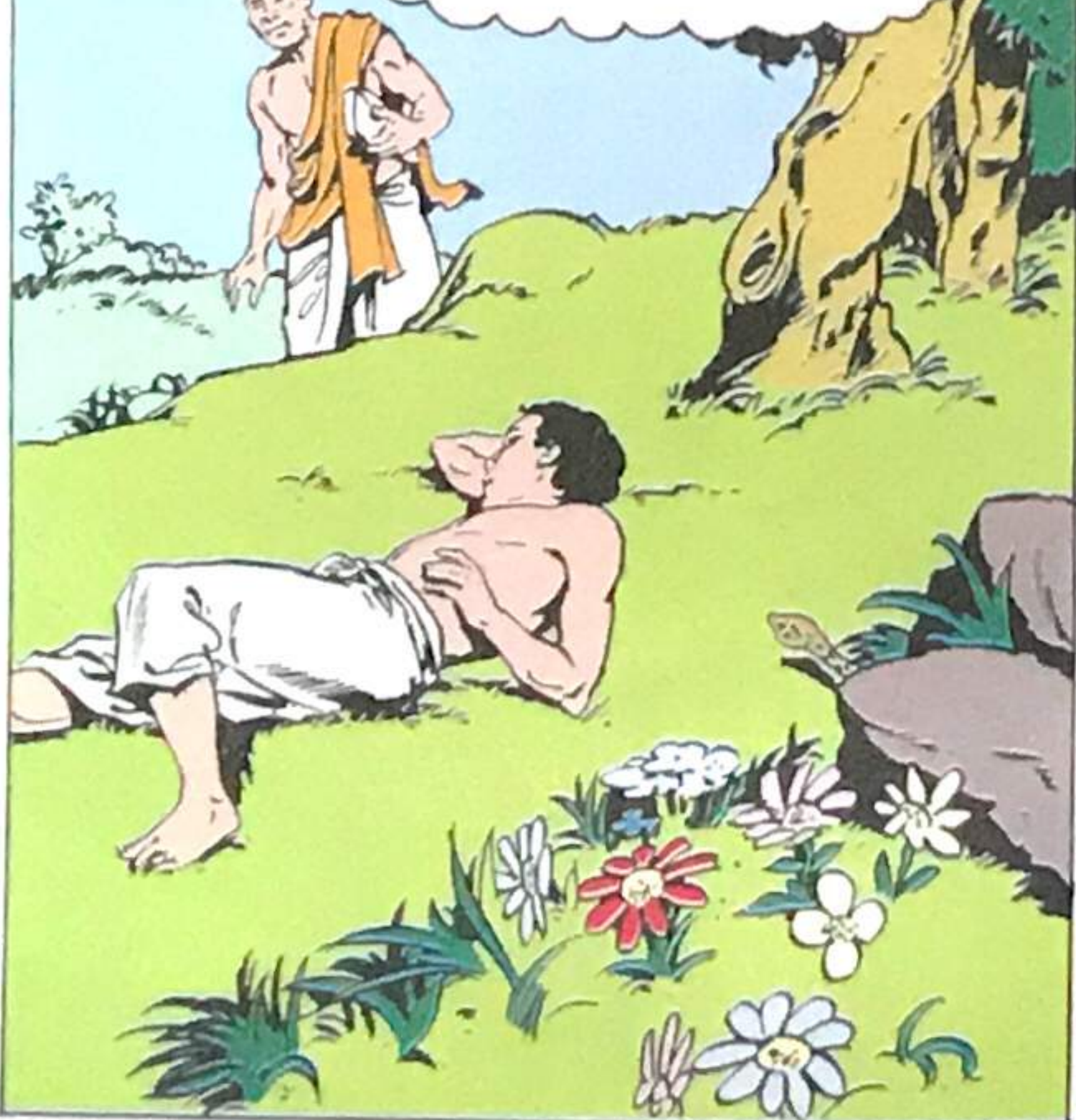


HOW GRATEFUL I AM  
TO AI FOR GUIDING  
ME TO THIS PATH!



ONE DAY —

POOR SHANKARA HAS  
FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE  
SUN. I SHALL WAKE HIM  
UP AND TELL HIM TO  
SLEEP IN THE SHADE.



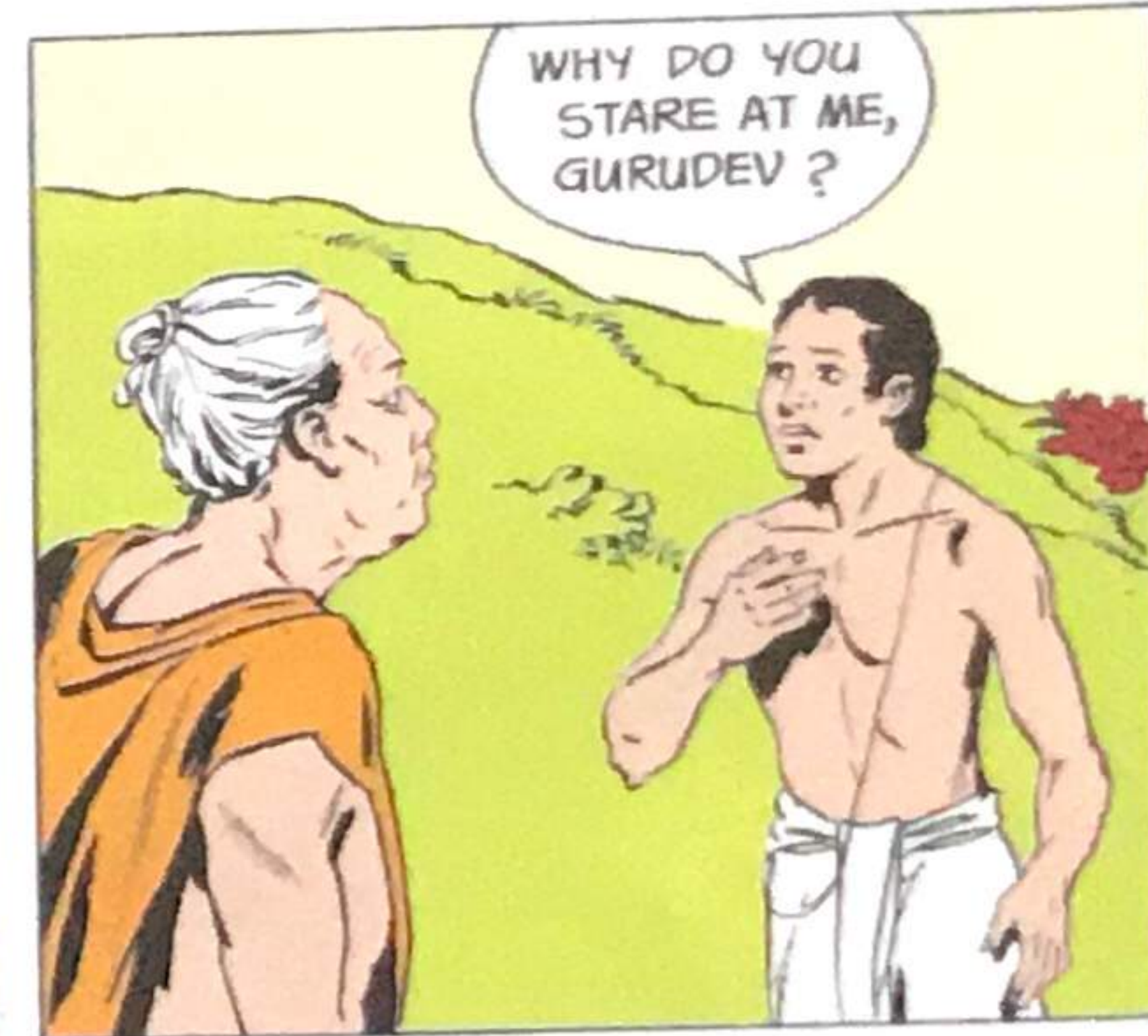
WHAT'S THAT?  
DO MY EYES  
DECEIVE ME?



A COBRA SHIELDING  
THE BOY FROM THE  
HOT RAYS OF  
THE SUN!



OH... FORGIVE ME,  
GURUDEV! IT WAS SO  
WARM I WENT TO  
SLEEP IN SPITE OF  
MYSELF.

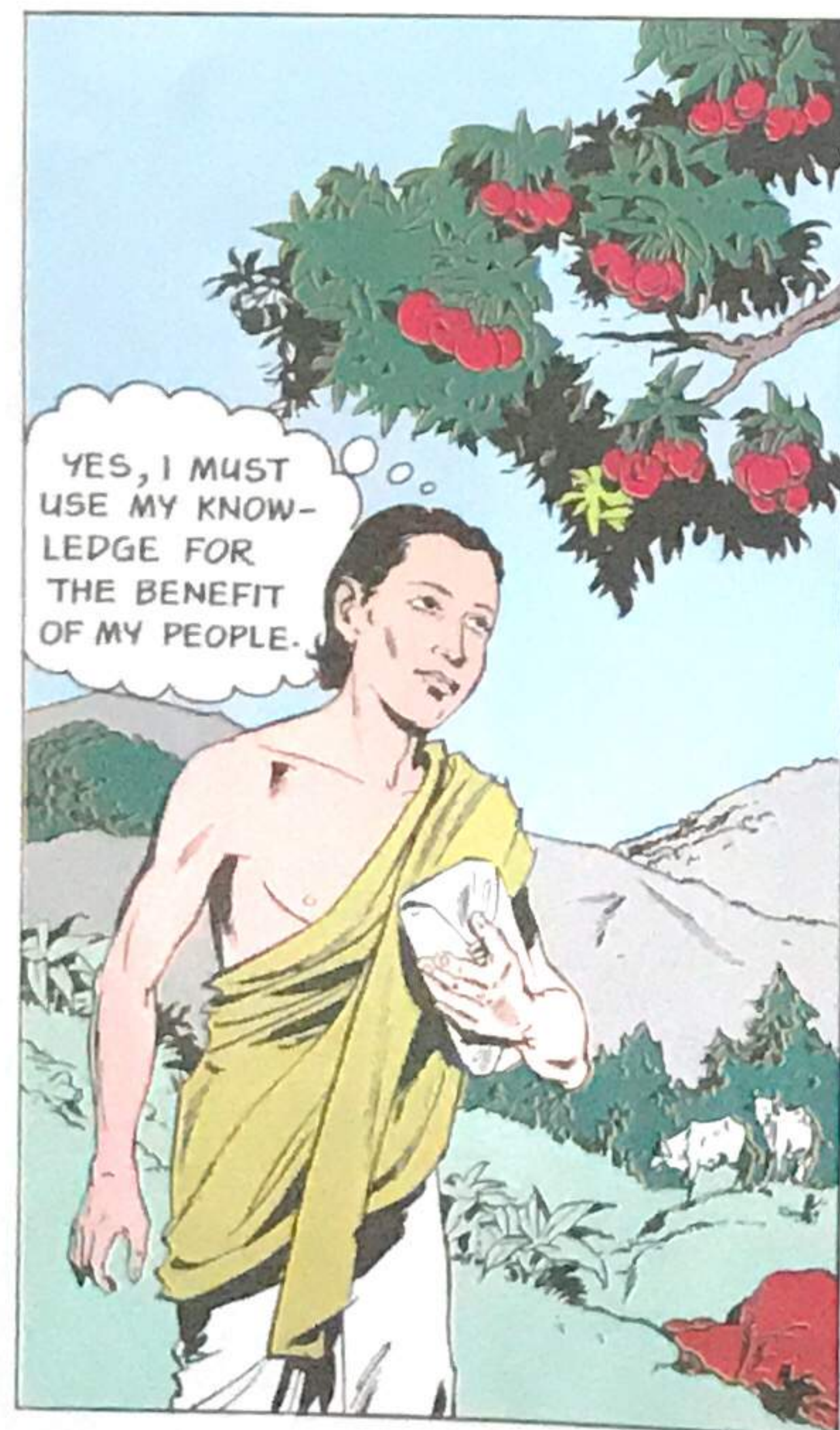
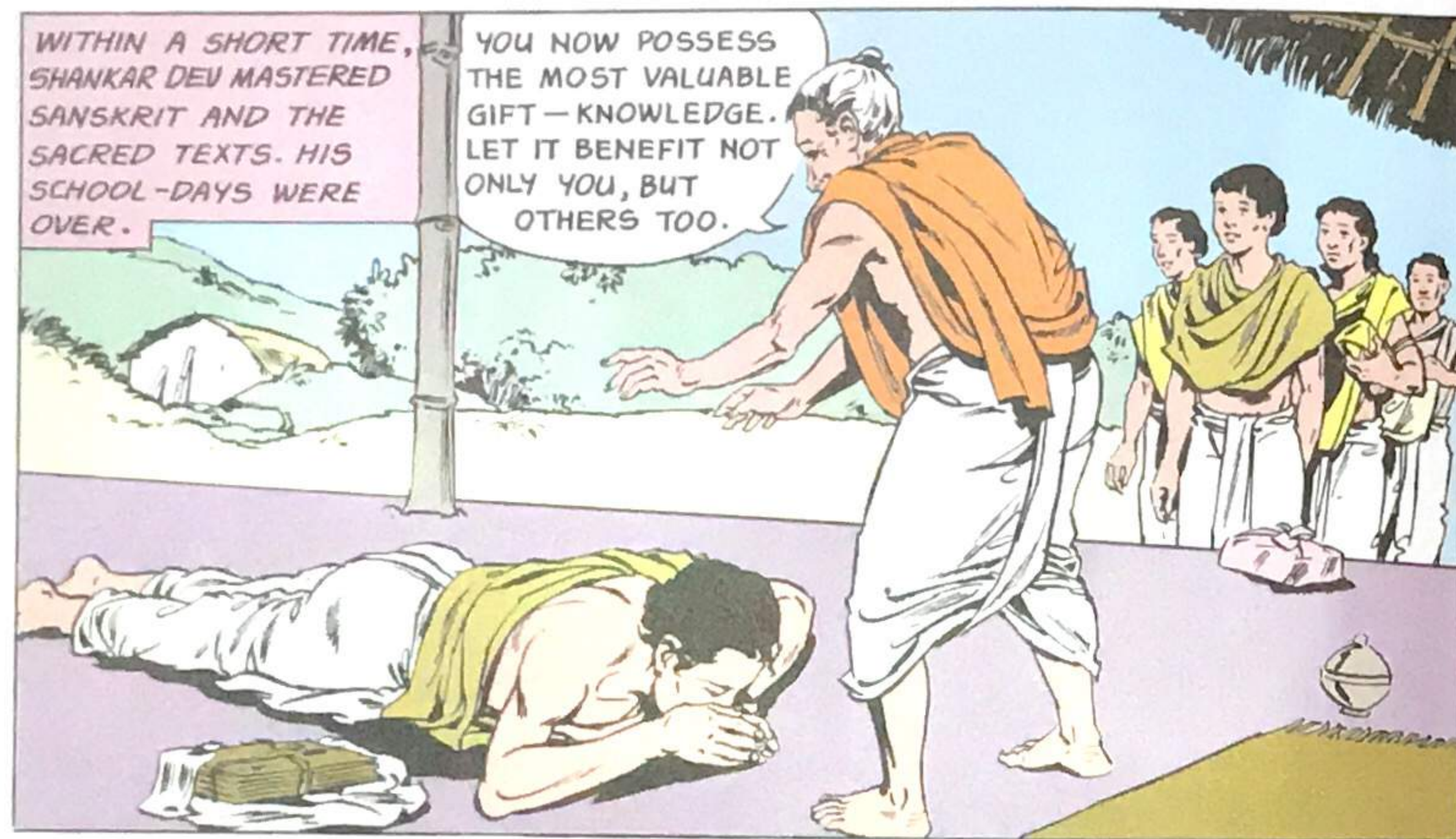


WHY DO YOU  
STARE AT ME,  
GURUDEV?



SHANKARA, YOU  
ARE NOT AN ORDINARY  
BOY. FROM TODAY, YOU  
SHALL BE KNOWN AS  
SHANKAR DEV.





WHEN SHANKAR DEV REACHED HOME —





SHANKAR DEV WAS MARRIED TO A BEAUTIFUL GIRL NAMED SURYAVATI.



SOON, A CHILD WAS BORN TO THEM.



WE'LL CALL HER HARIPRIYA.

AND THEN SURYAVATI DIED. SHANKAR DEV FELL INTO THE DEPTHS OF DEPRESSION.



MARRIAGE... CHILDREN... ATTACHMENT... DEATH... MISERY... IS THAT ALL THERE IS TO LIFE?

THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED WERE TROUBLED ONES FOR THE SHIROMANI.



I AM A SUCCESSFUL RULER. I AM RESPECTED BY MY PEOPLE. AND YET... I AM DISCONTENTED. I YEARN FOR SOMETHING. WHAT IS IT? I MUST FIND OUT.

HE BEGAN TO SPEND MORE AND MORE TIME IN CONTEMPLATION. HIS RELATIVES WERE WORRIED.



SHANKARA, SPEAK OUT TO US.

WE ARE YOUR UNCLES. CONFIDE IN US.

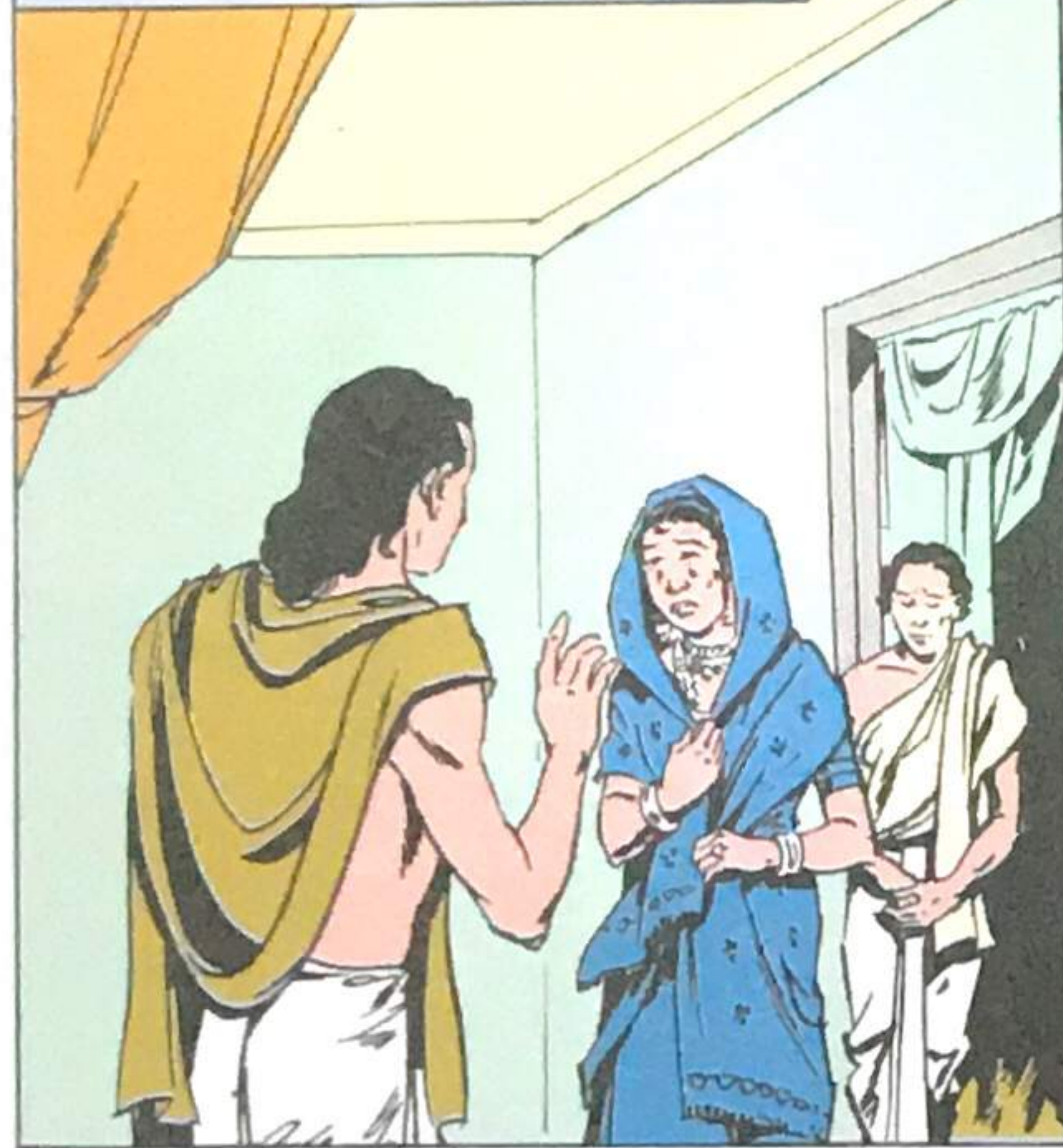
I LONG TO FREE MYSELF FROM THE BONDS OF LEADERSHIP AND GO AWAY — ON A LONG PILGRIMAGE.



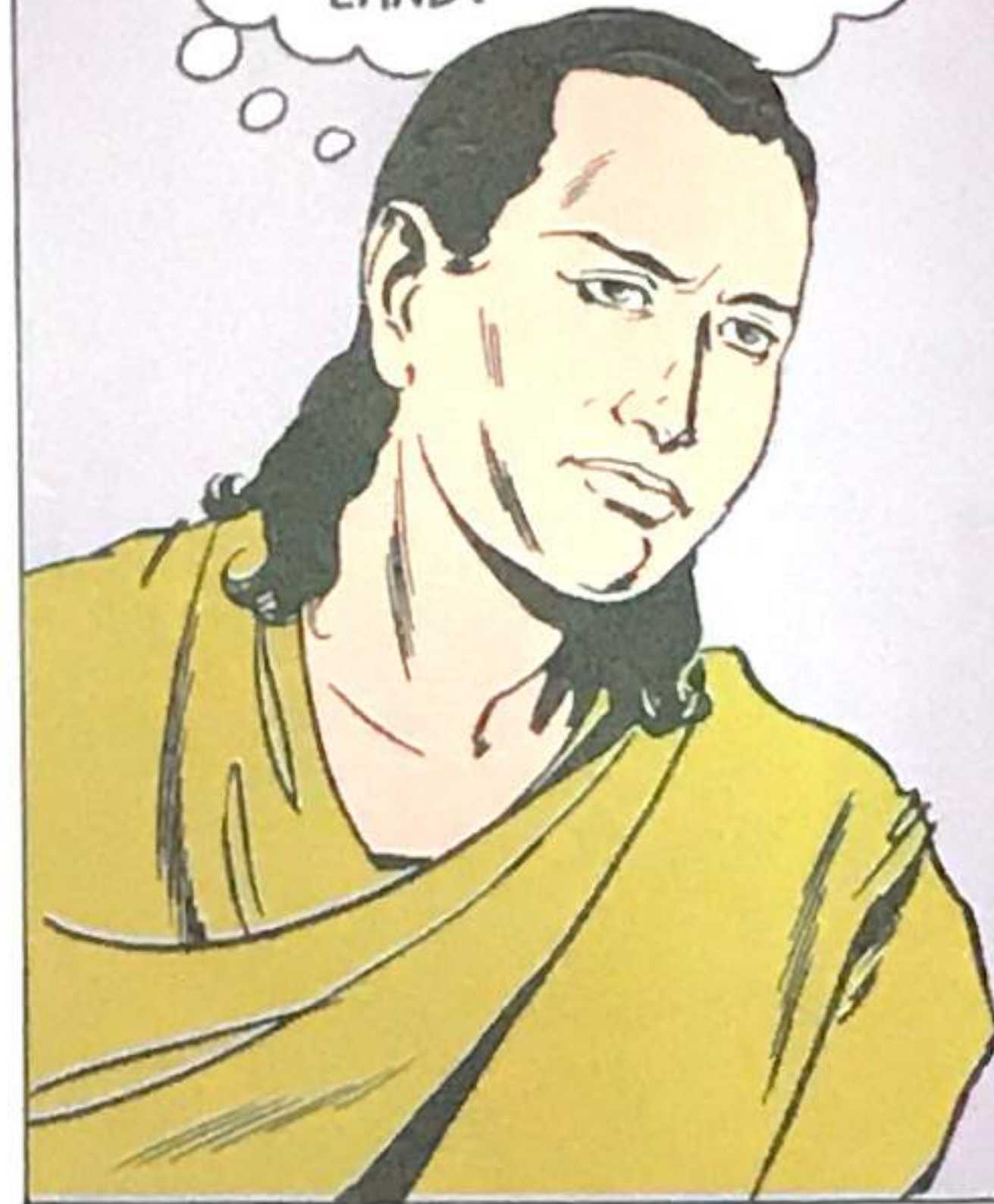
IF YOU MUST, PLEASE WAIT TILL HARIPRIYA IS MARRIED. WE CAN TAKE ON THE BURDEN OF RULING THE LAND; BUT TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER WELL SETTLED IS YOUR DUTY.



SO SHANKAR DEV WAITED TILL HARIPRIYA CAME OF AGE AND MARRIED HER TO HARI, THE SON OF A BHUYAN.



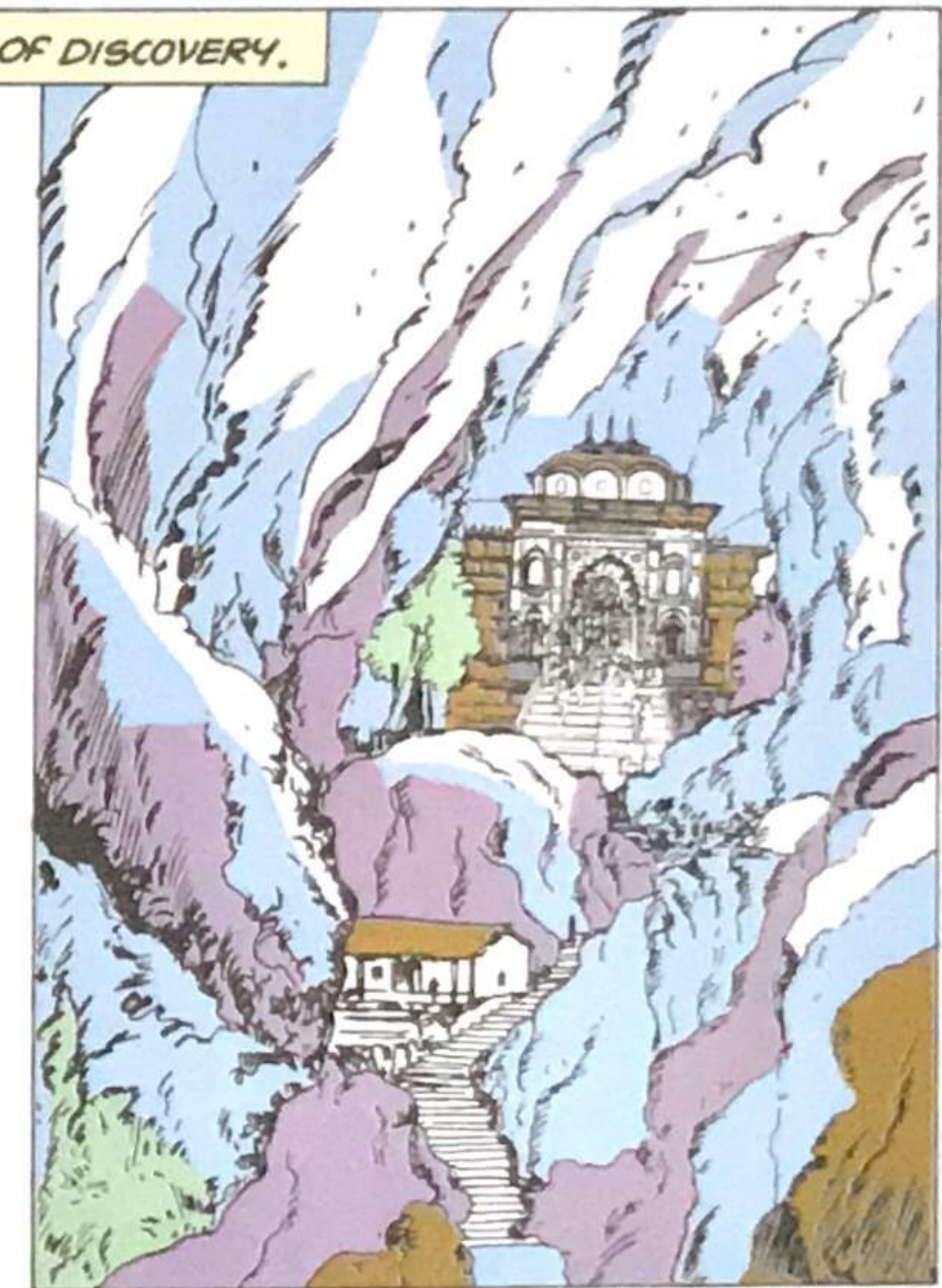
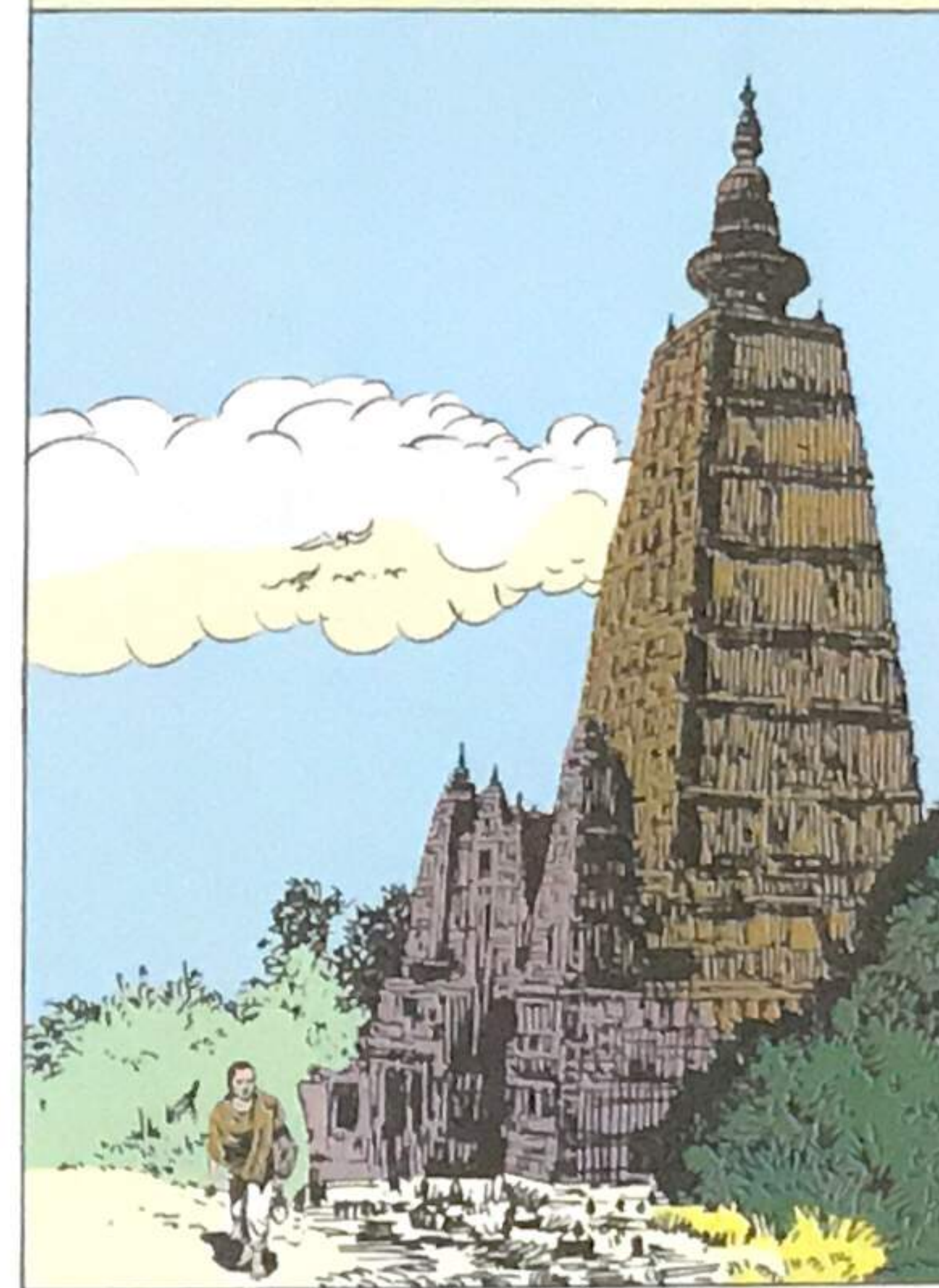
I HAVE AT LAST FULFILLED MY DUTIES AS A FATHER. I MAY NOW FULFIL MY LONG-CHERISHED DREAM OF VISITING THE SACRED PLACES OF MY MOTHER-LAND.



WITH SEVENTEEN OTHERS, INCLUDING MAHENDRA KANDALI, SHANKAR DEV LEFT ALIPUKHURI.

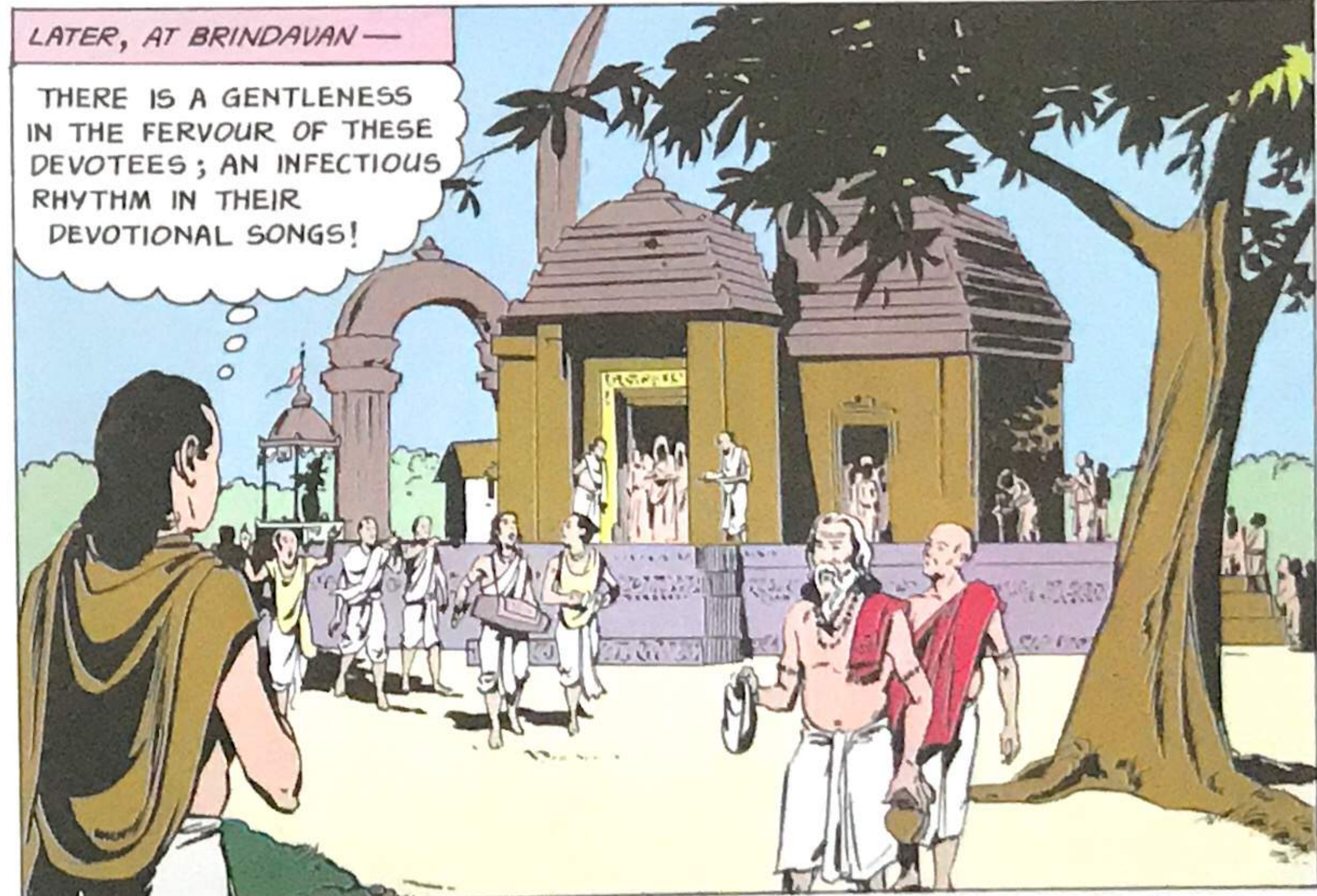


AND SO BEGAN SHANKAR DEV'S VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY.

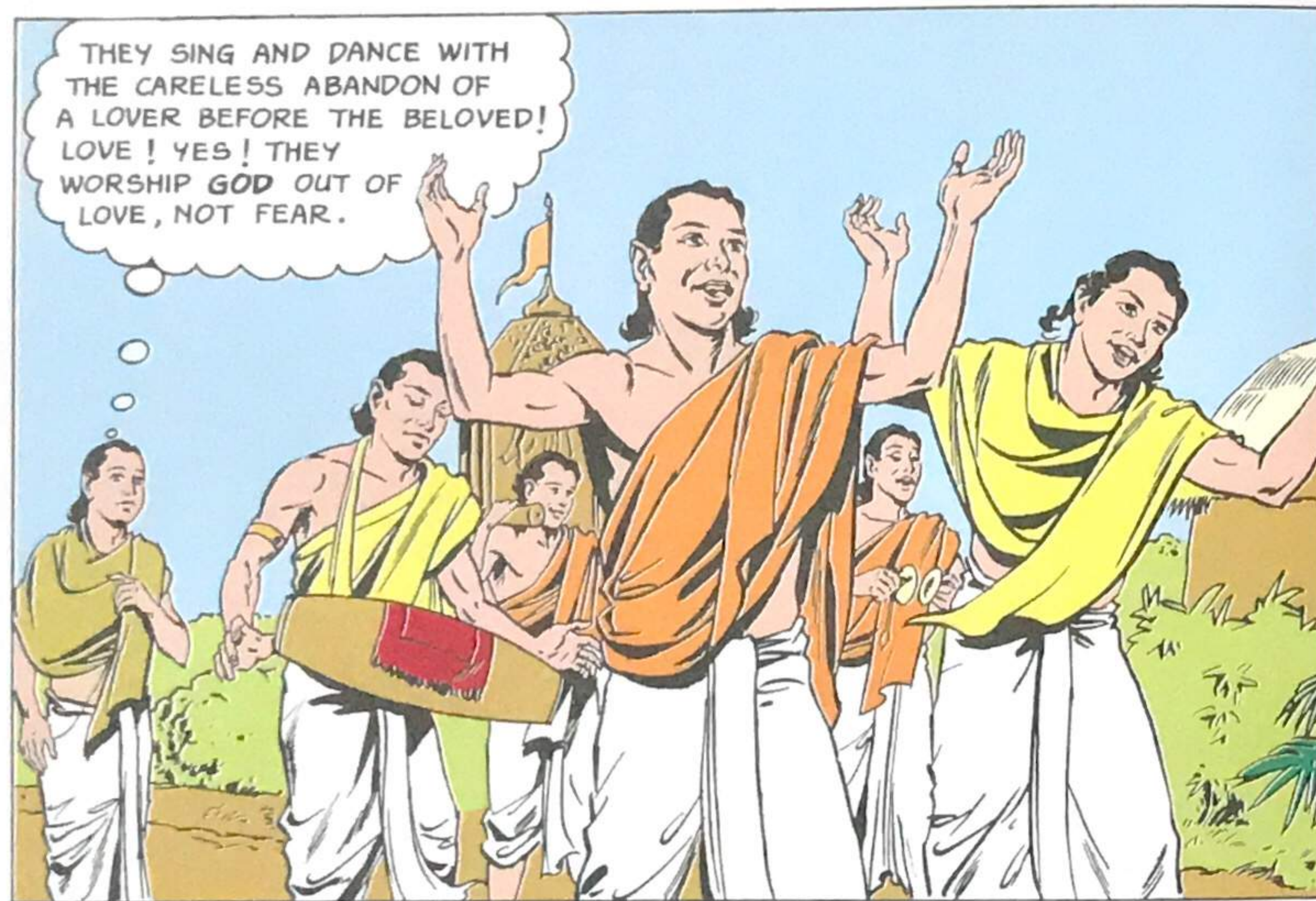


LATER, AT BRINDAVAN —

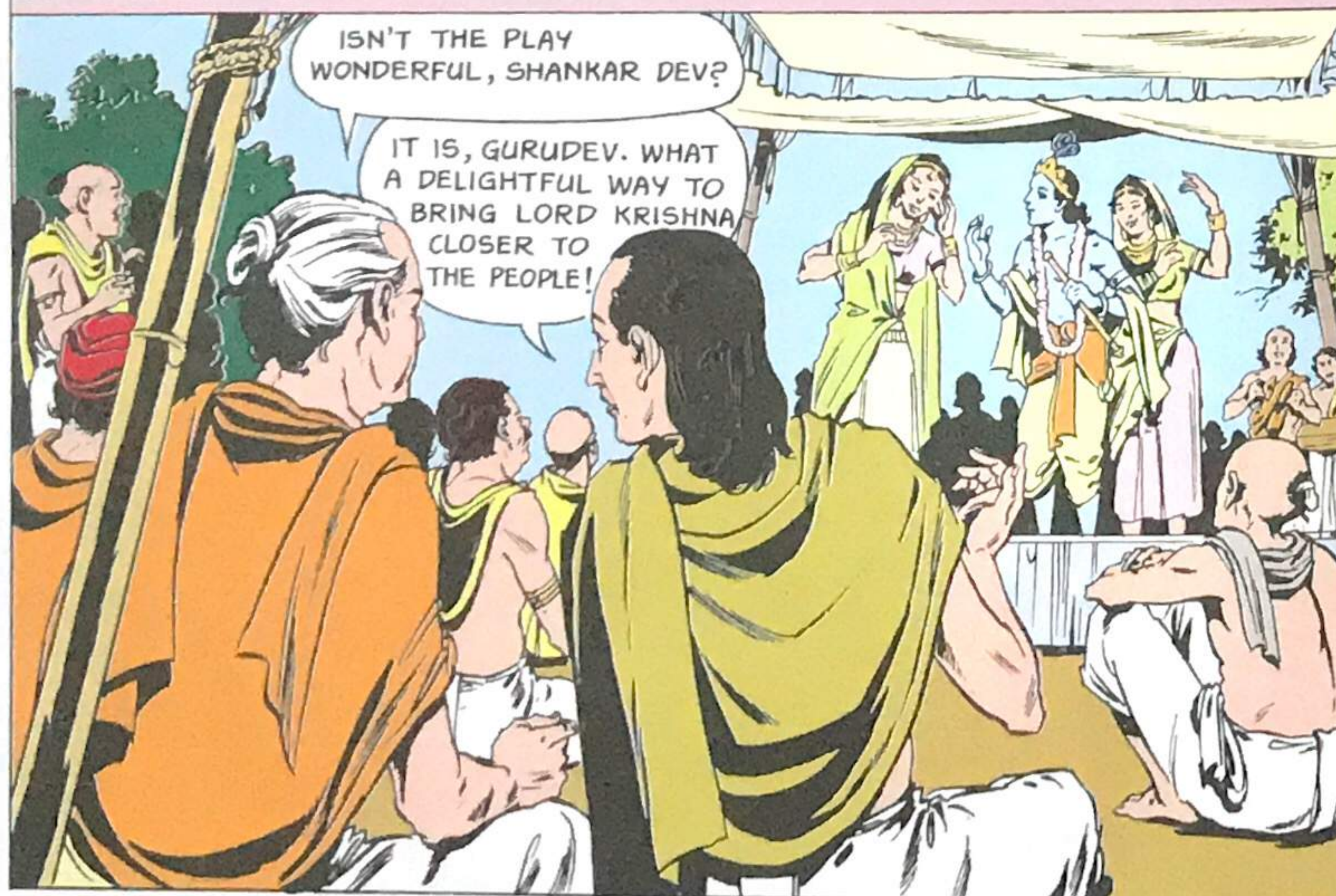
THERE IS A GENTLENESS IN THE FERVOUR OF THESE DEVOTEES; AN INFECTIOUS RHYTHM IN THEIR DEVOTIONAL SONGS!



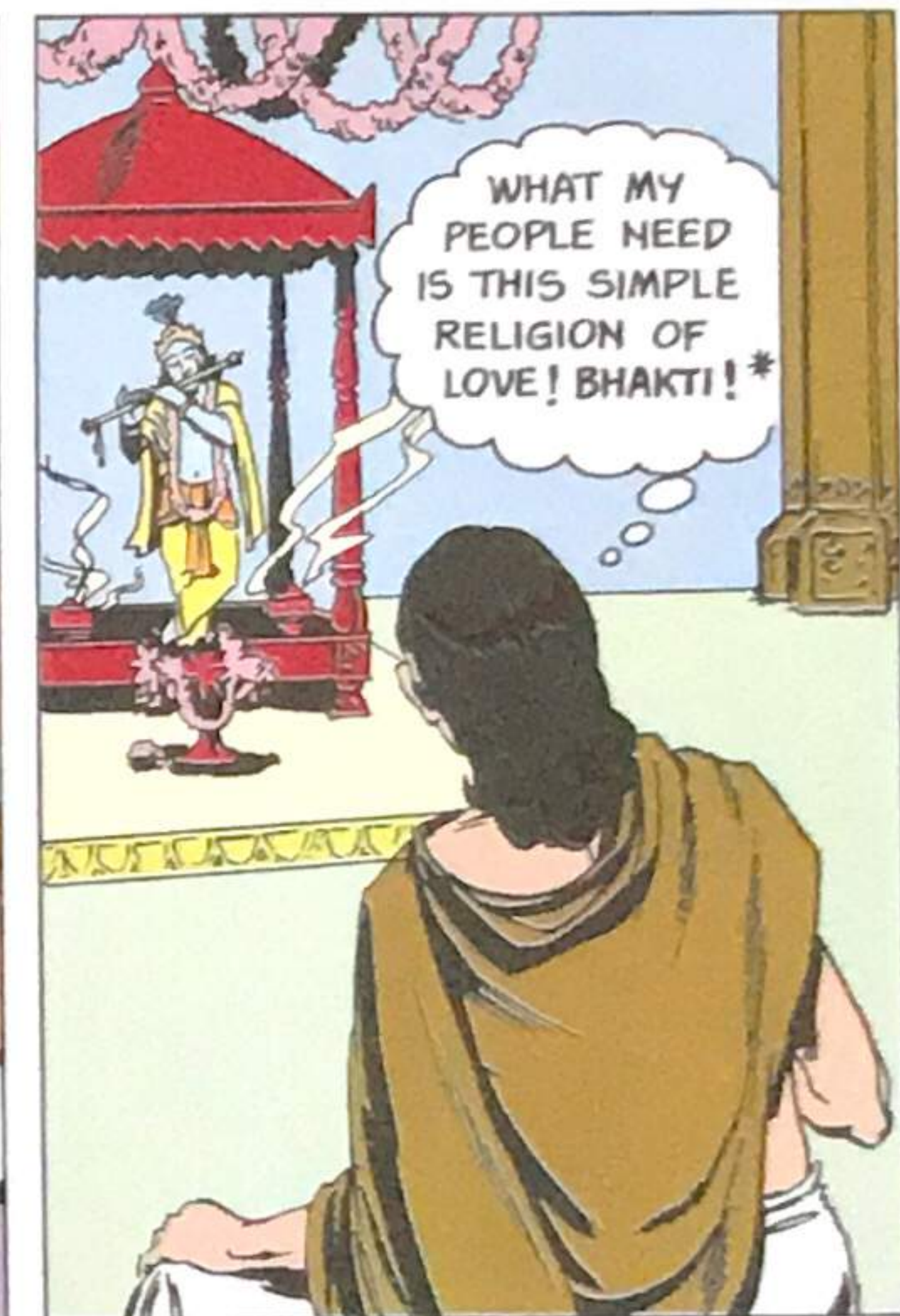
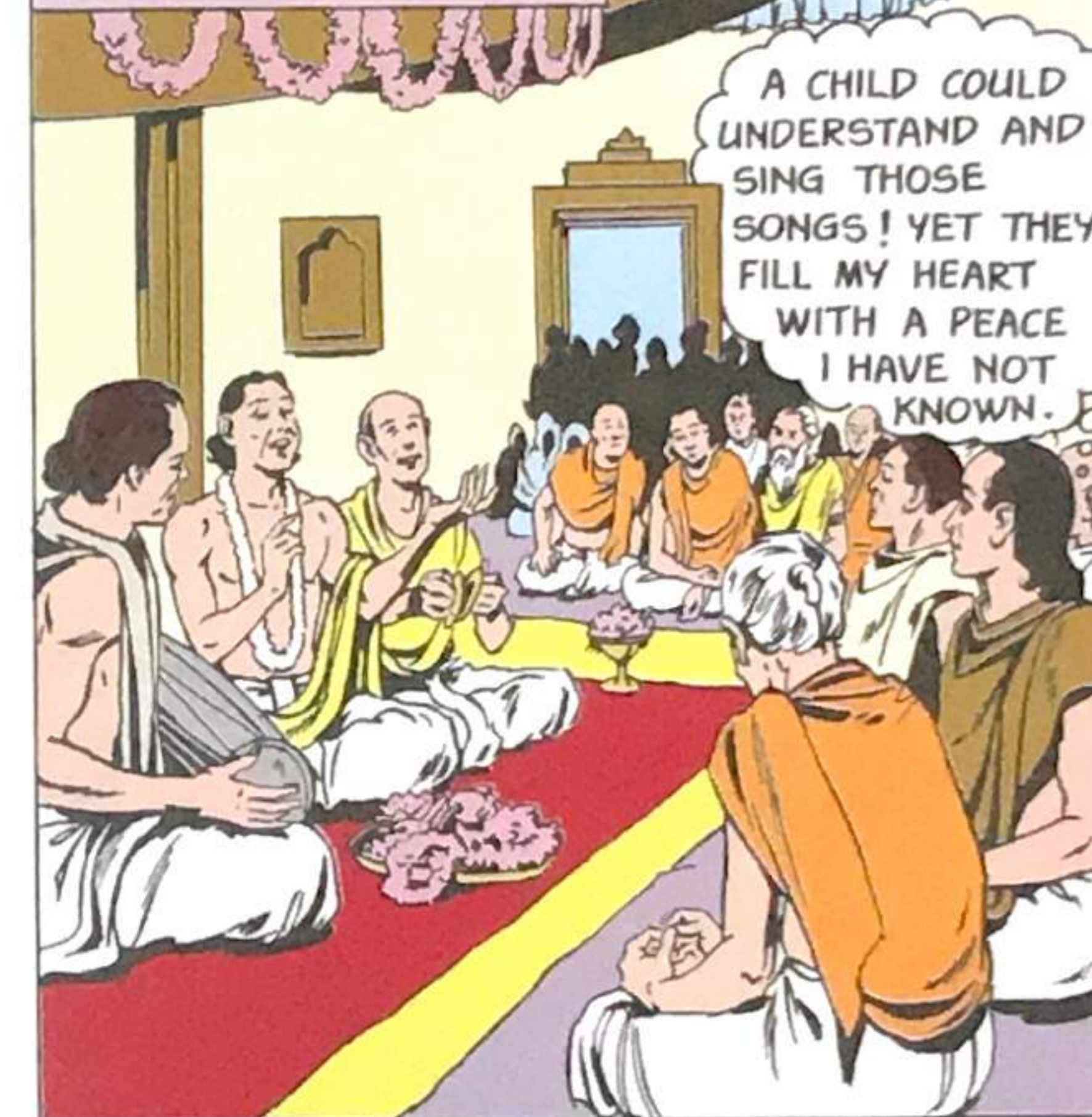




SHANKAR DEV ALSO SAW MUSICAL PLAYS ON THE LIVES OF KRISHNA AND RAMA.



WHAT IMPRESSED HIM MOST HOWEVER WAS THE SIMPLE LANGUAGE OF THE DEVOTIONAL SONGS SUNG IN THE TEMPLES.

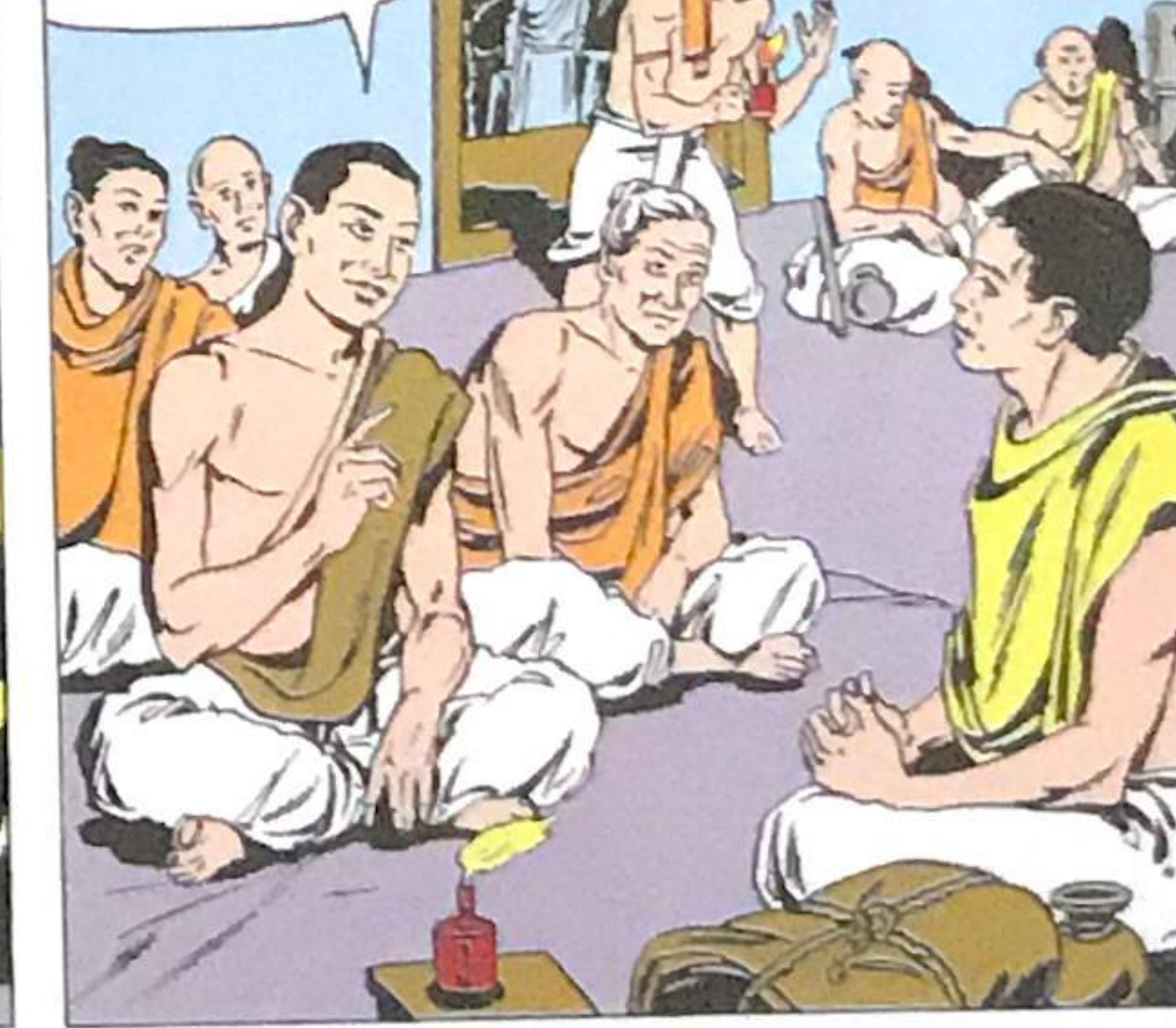


BHAKTI THAT TEACHES MAN TO LOVE, NOT FEAR GOD; BHAKTI THAT TEACHES MAN TO LOVE, NOT DESPISE, HIS LESS FORTUNATE BROTHERS.

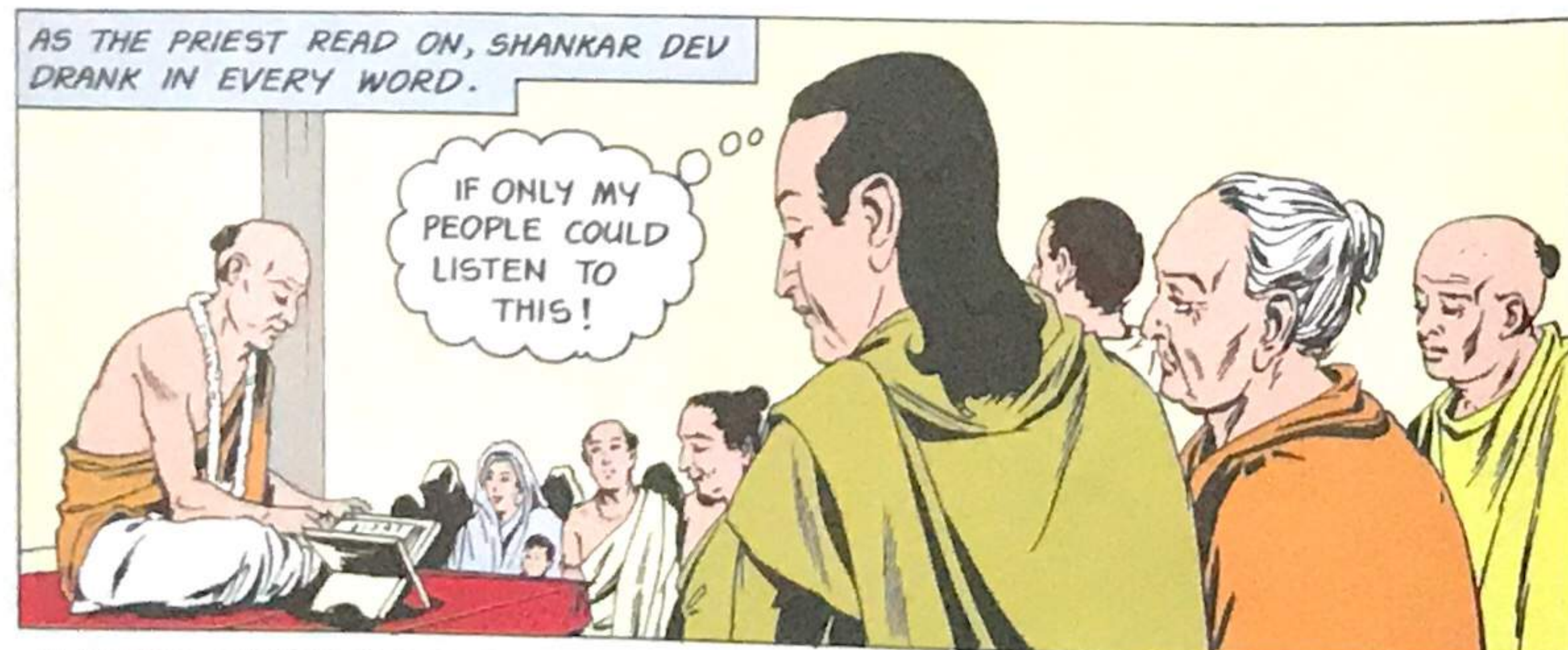
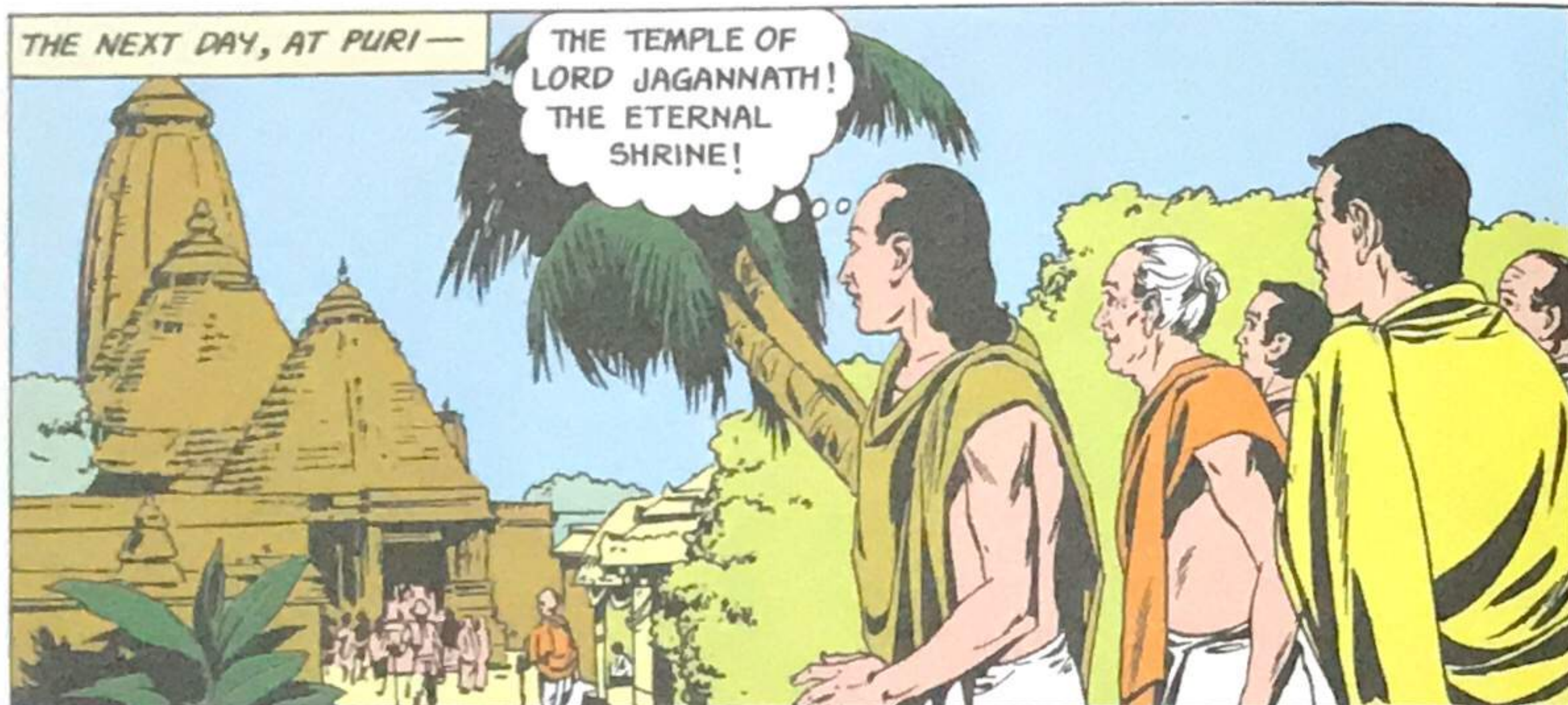


FOR TWELVE YEARS SHANKAR DEV AND HIS COMPANIONS ROAMED THE COUNTRY.

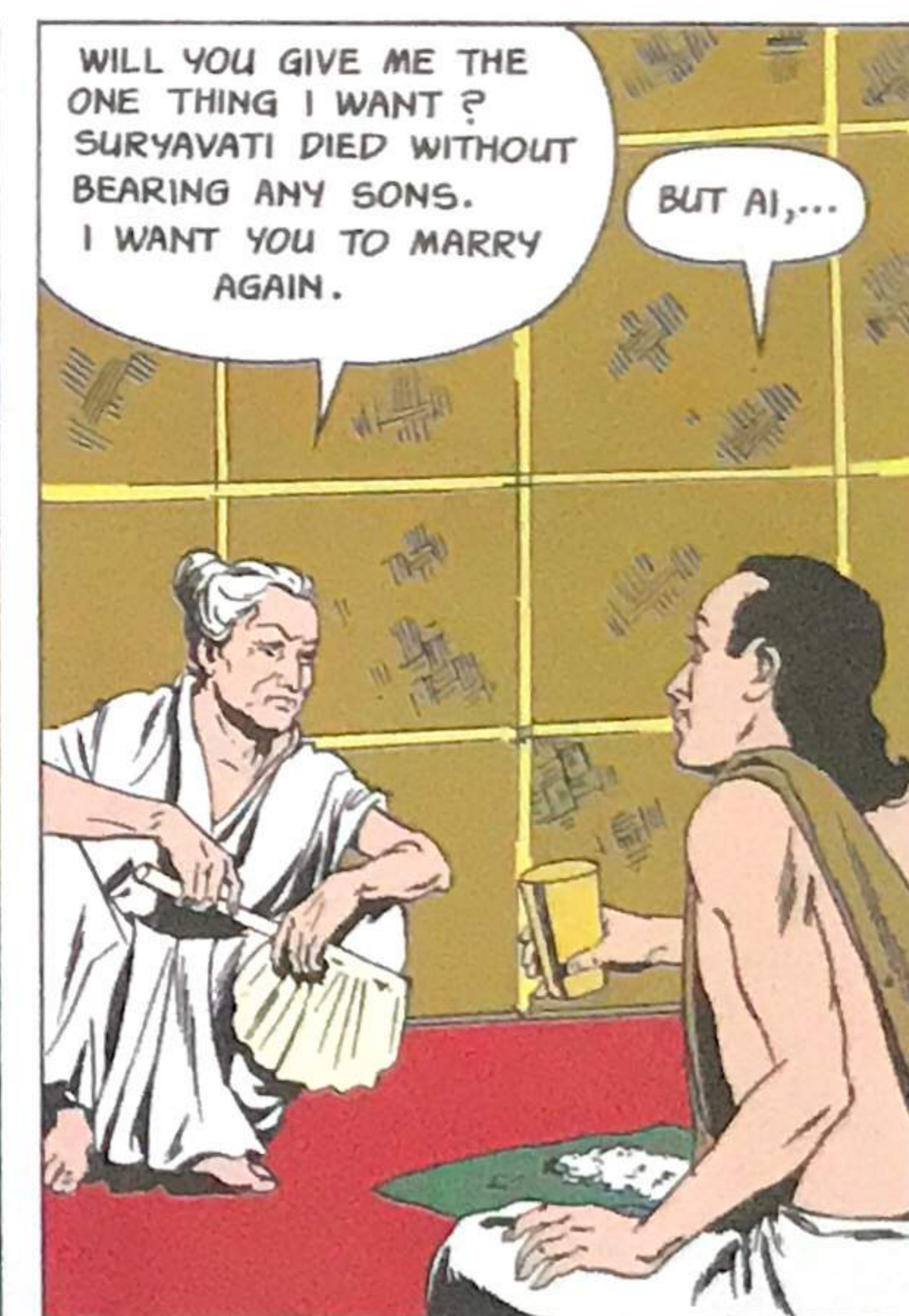
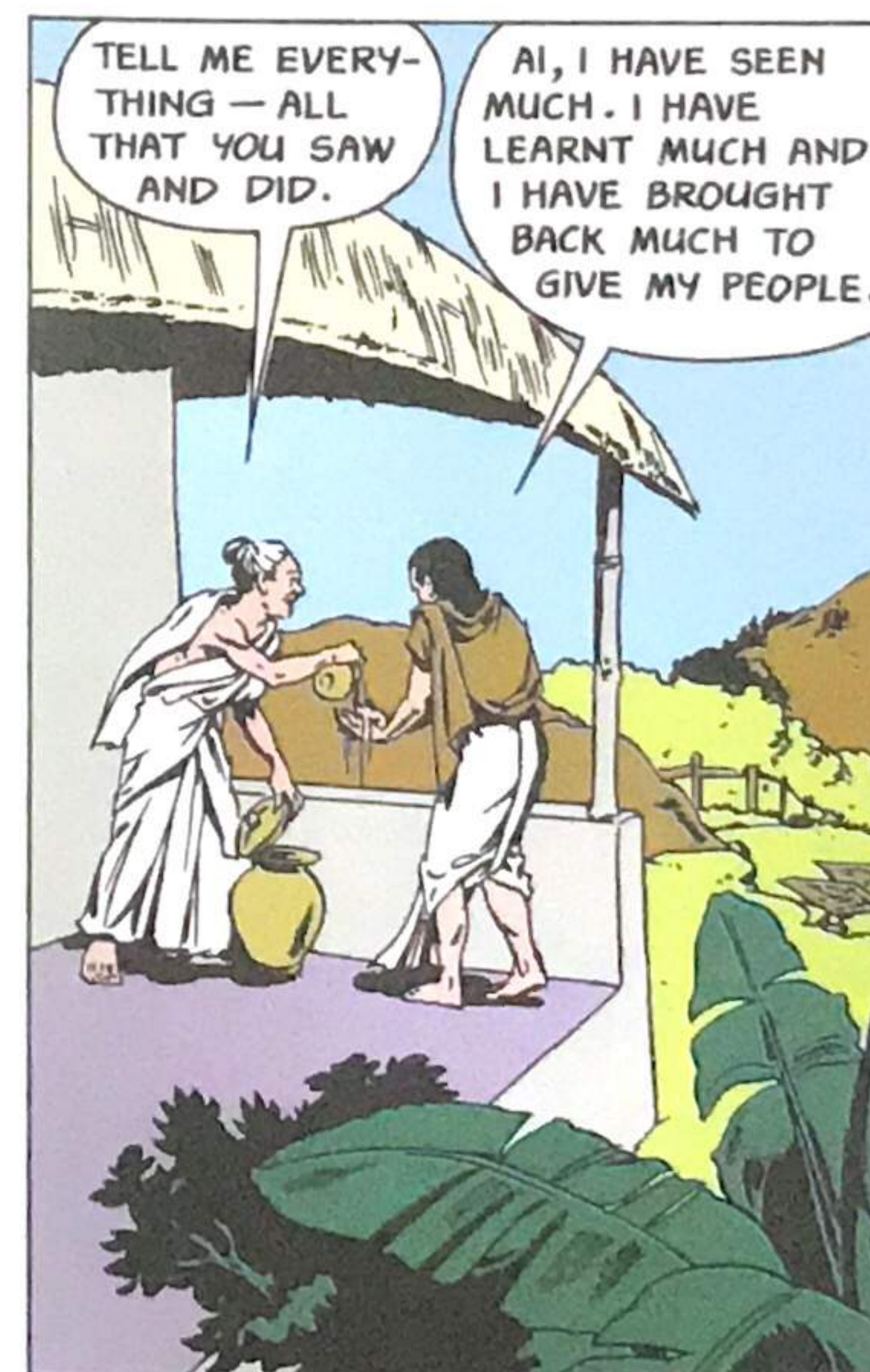
WE HAVE DRUNK OF THE NECTAR OF VARANASI, BADRIKA-SHRAM, GAYA AND VRINDAVAN. TOMORROW WE SHALL REACH THE HOLY CITY OF PURI.





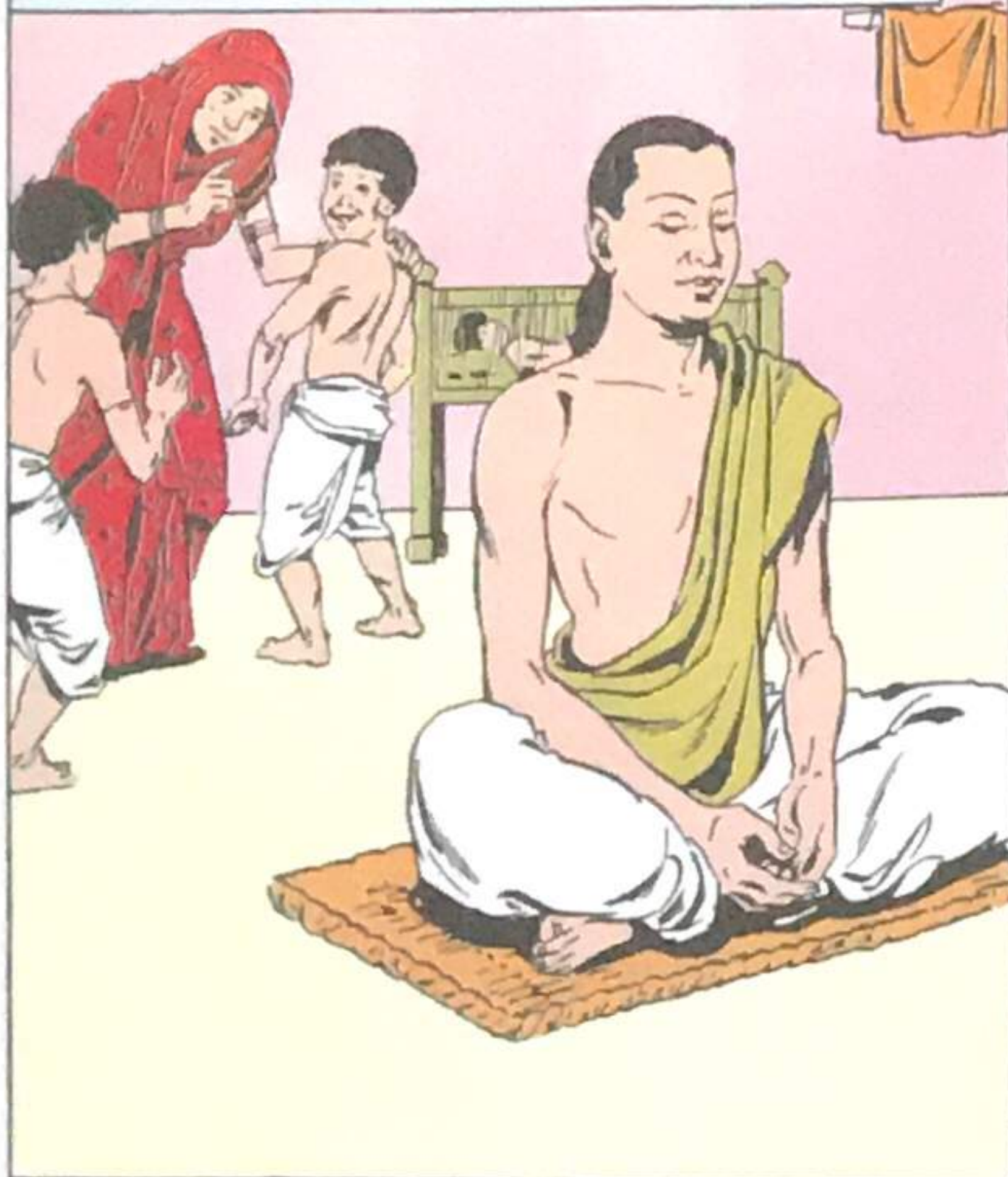


\* COPIES OF THE BHAGAWAT WERE NOT EASILY AVAILABLE IN THOSE DAYS AS THEY HAD TO BE HANDWRITTEN ON PALM LEAVES.

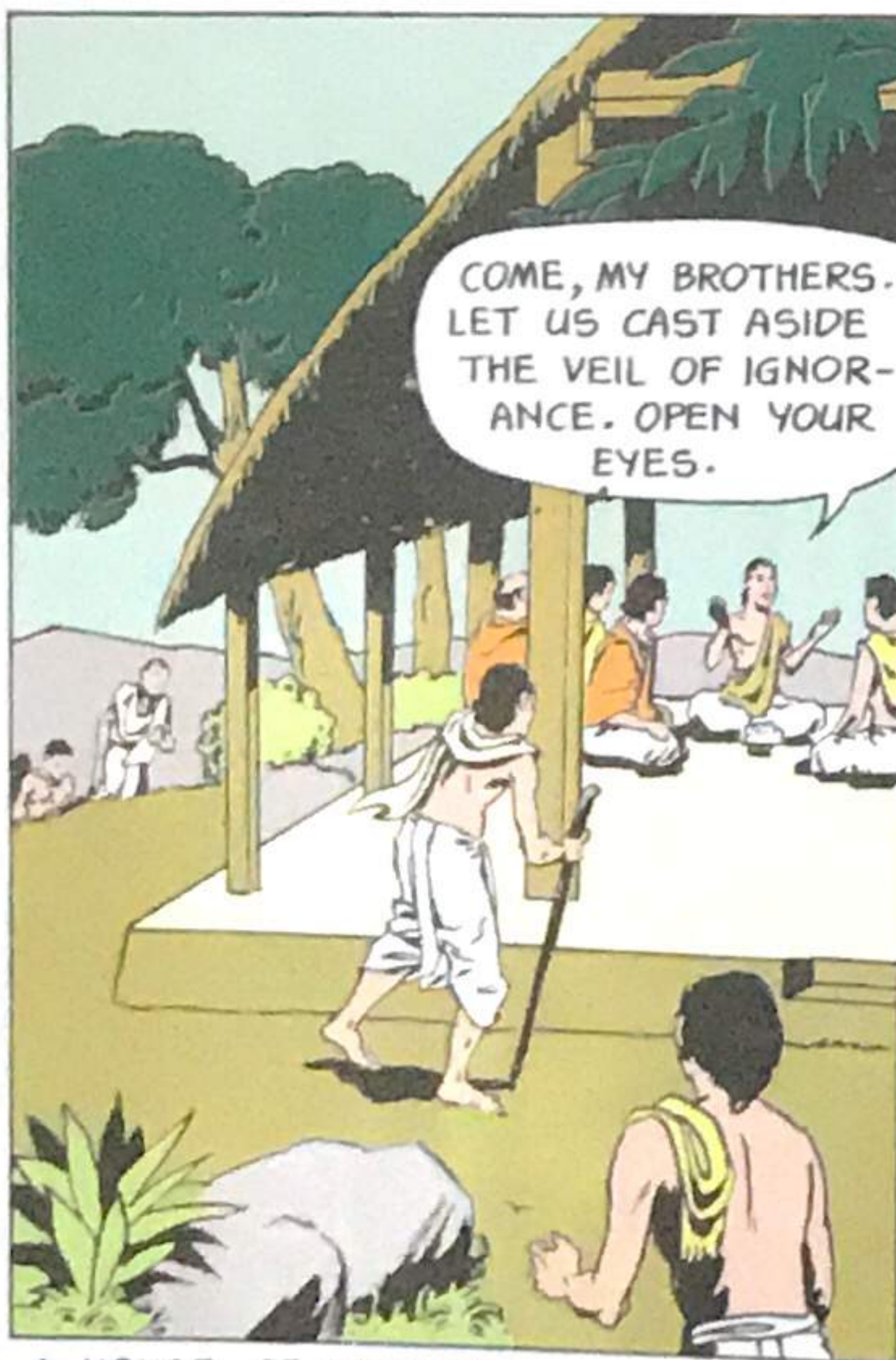
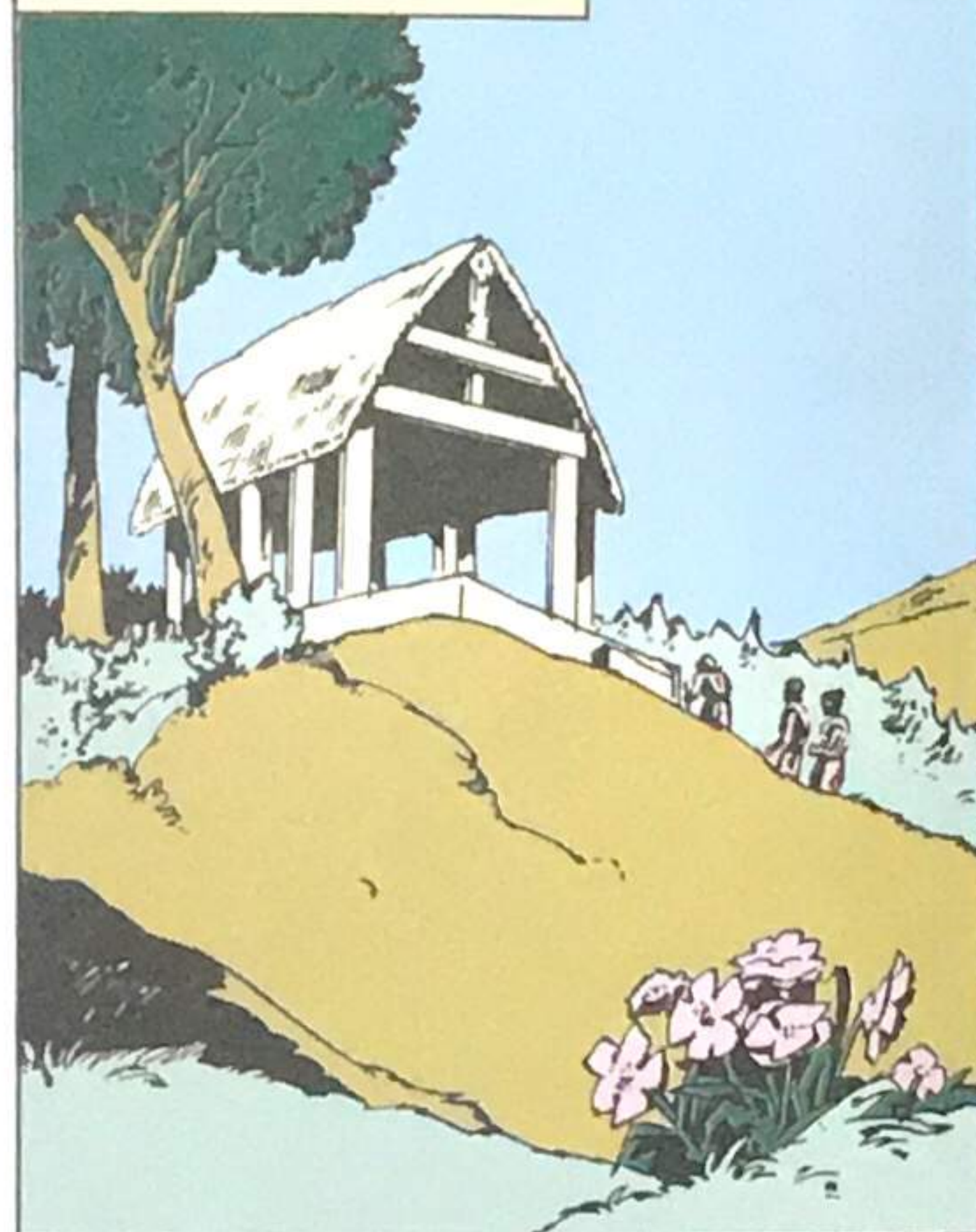




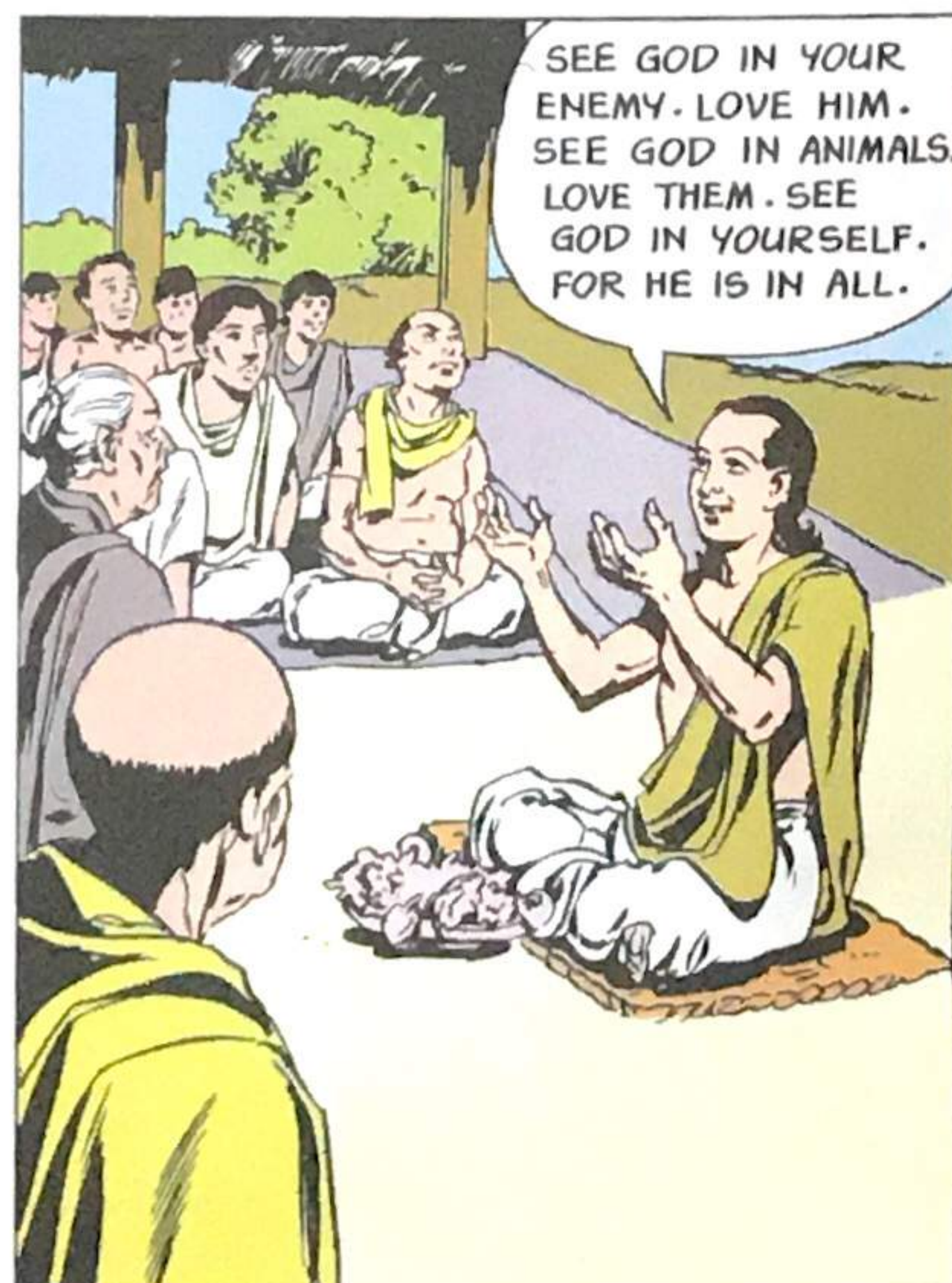
AT LAST, FOR KERSUTI'S SAKE, SHANKAR DEV MARRIED AGAIN AND HAD THREE SONS. BUT HE DID NOT LET MARRIAGE INTERFERE WITH HIS SPIRITUAL LIFE.



AT BARDOWA, WHERE HE NOW LIVED, SHANKAR DEV SELECTED A SECLUDED PLACE AND BUILT A NAMGHAR.\* THIS BECAME THE WELLSPRING OF THE NEW RELIGION.



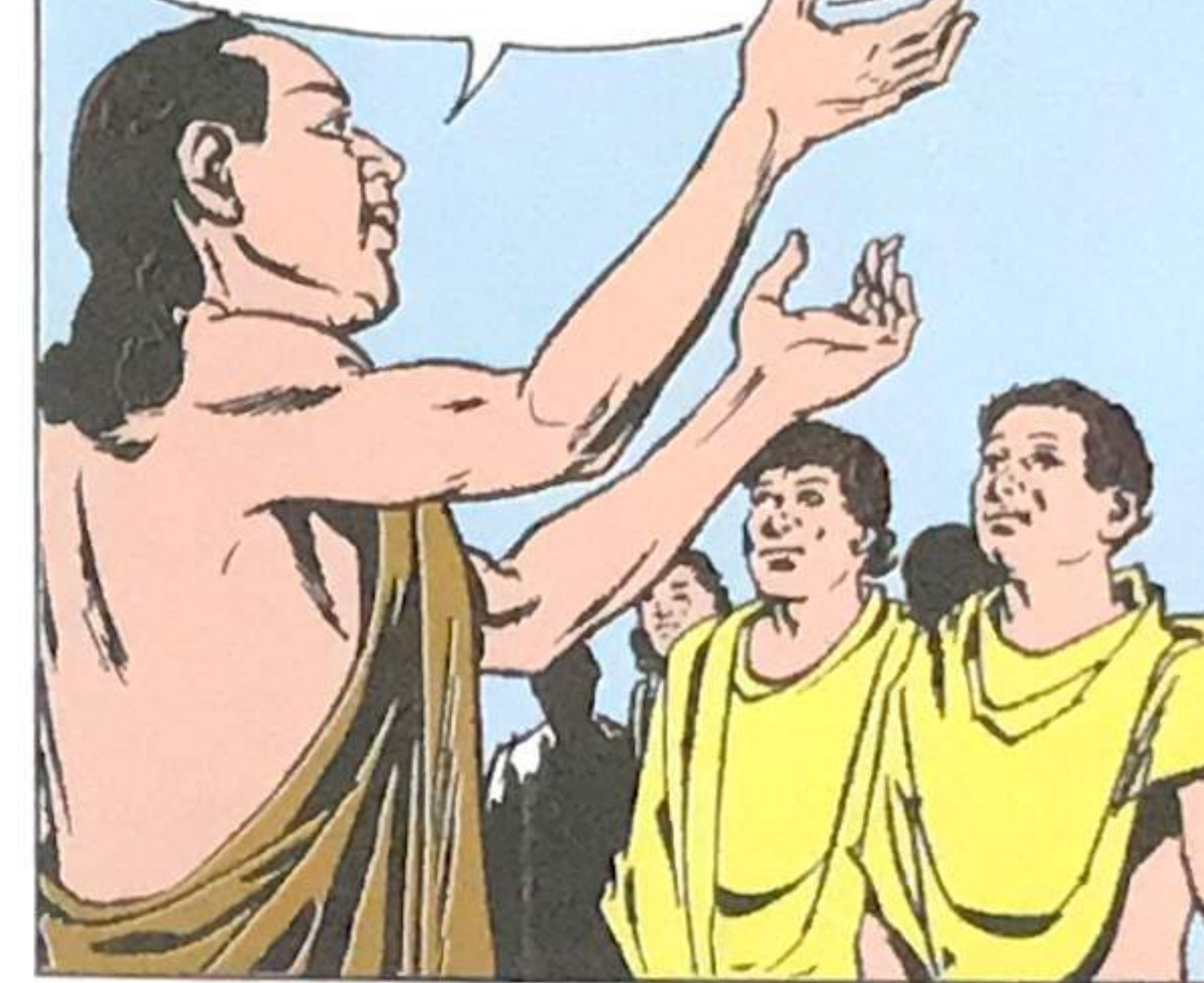
COME, MY BROTHERS. LET US CAST ASIDE THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE. OPEN YOUR EYES.



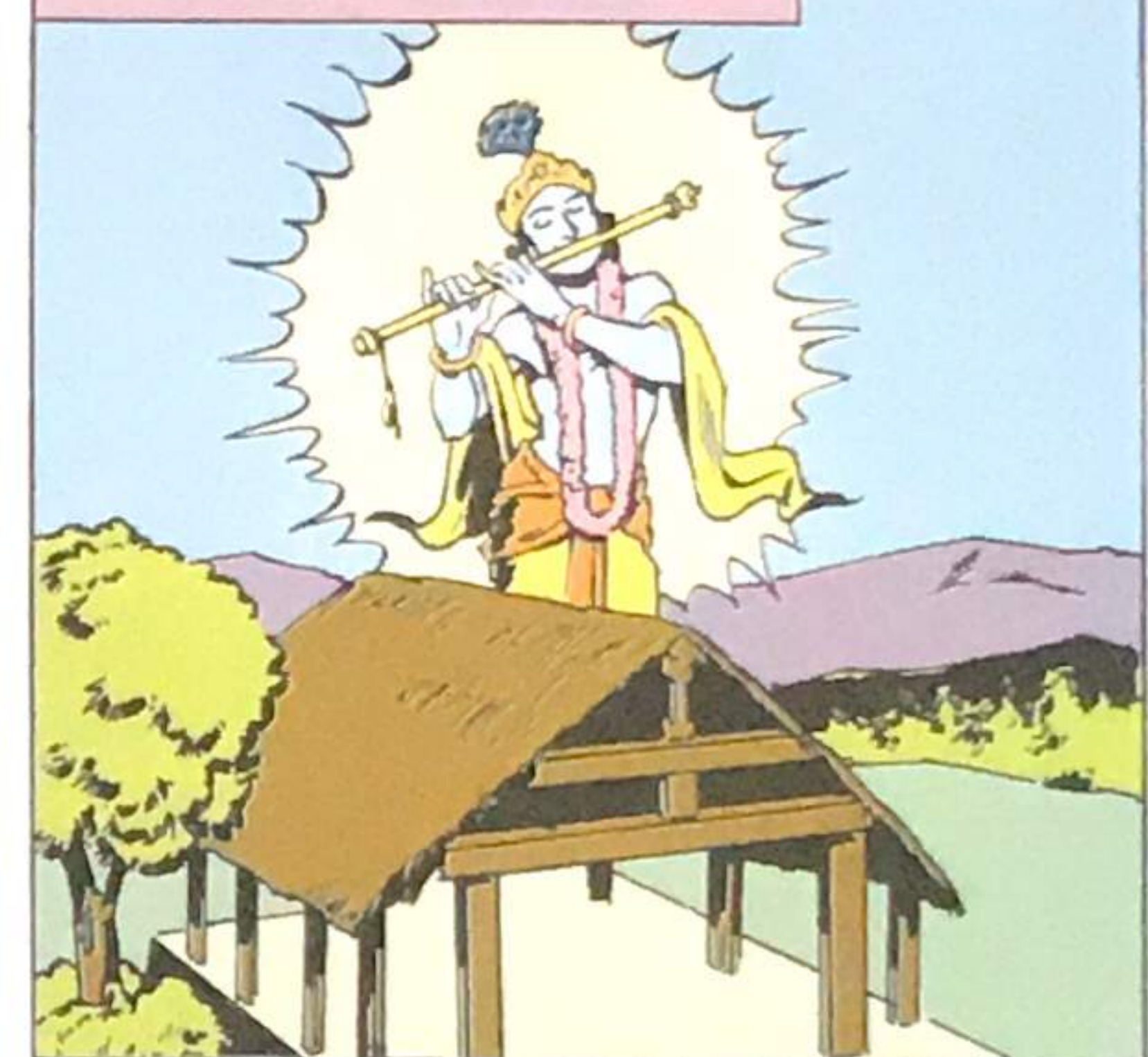
SEE GOD IN YOUR ENEMY. LOVE HIM. SEE GOD IN ANIMALS. LOVE THEM. SEE GOD IN YOURSELF. FOR HE IS IN ALL.

\* HOUSE OF WORSHIP

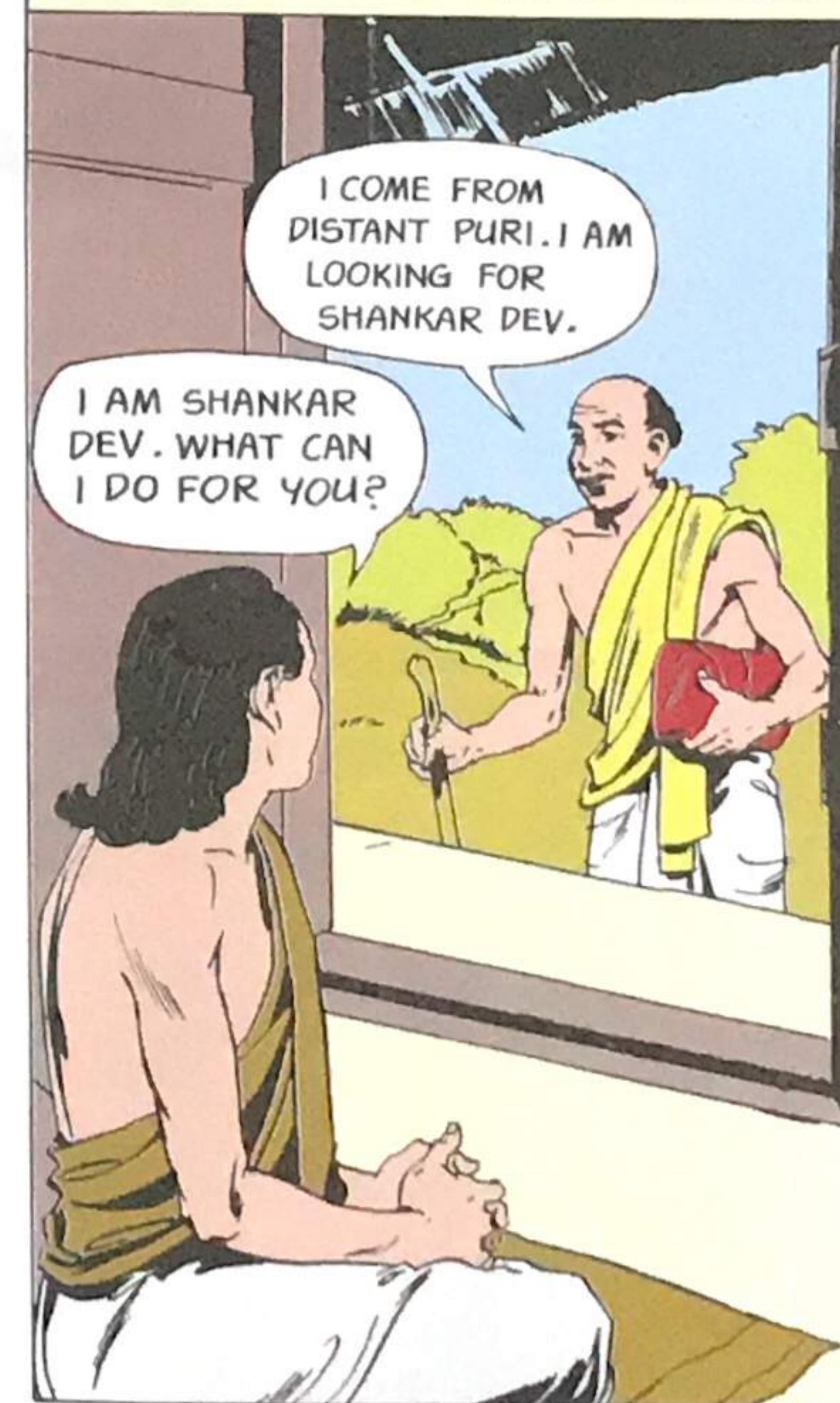
SHUN THE STRANGE DEITIES THAT WILL BE PLEASED ONLY WITH THE BLOOD OF INNOCENT ANIMALS. WORSHIP THE ONE WHO IS CONTENT WITH YOUR LOVING DEVOTION.



AND SO, THE EKASHARANA DHARMA, SHANKAR DEV'S VAISHNAVA MOVEMENT TOOK ROOT IN ASSAM.



ONE DAY, A STRANGER CAME TO BARDOWA.

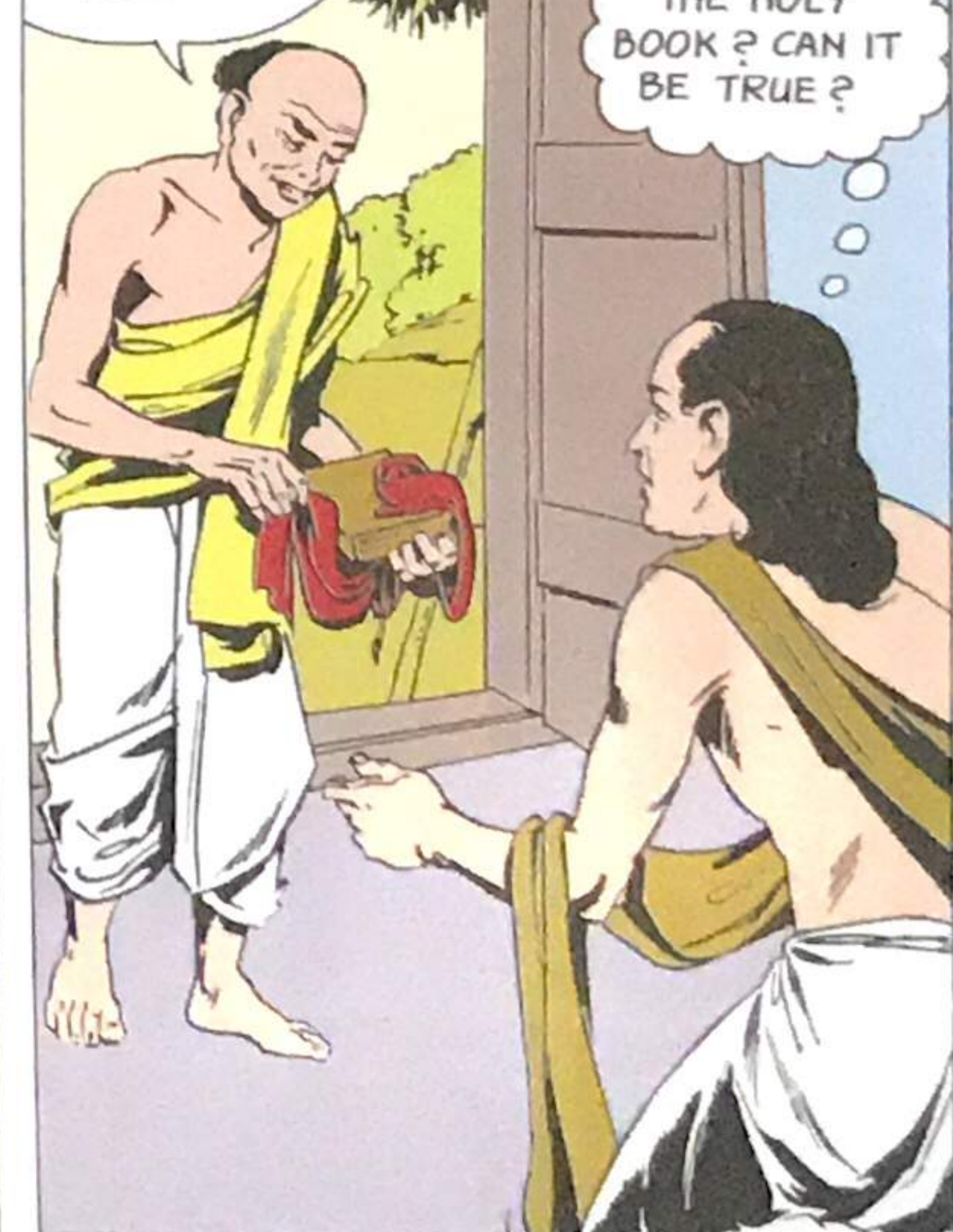


I COME FROM DISTANT PURI. I AM LOOKING FOR SHANKAR DEV.

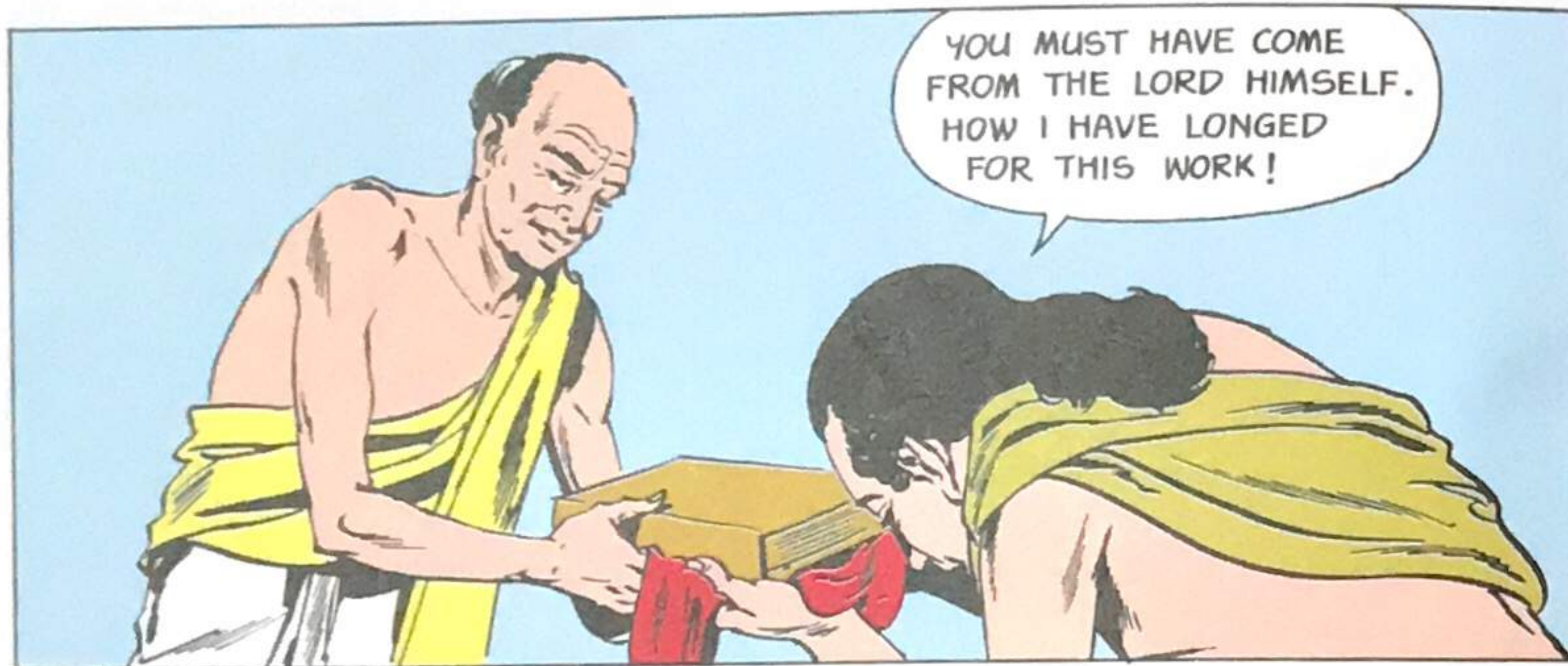
I AM SHANKAR DEV. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

MY NAME IS JAGDISH MISHRA. I HAVE BROUGHT A COPY OF THE BHAGAWAT PURANA FOR YOU.

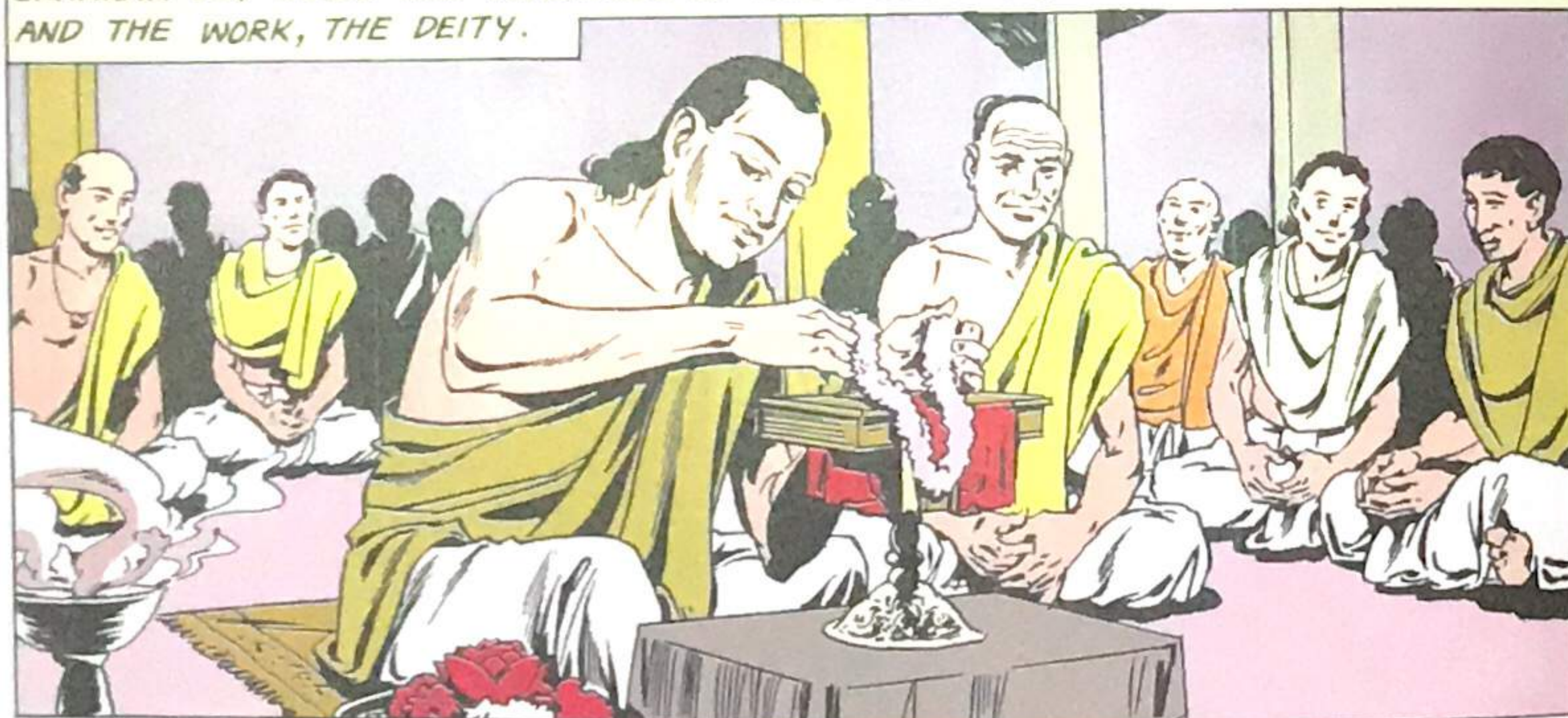
THE HOLY BOOK? CAN IT BE TRUE?



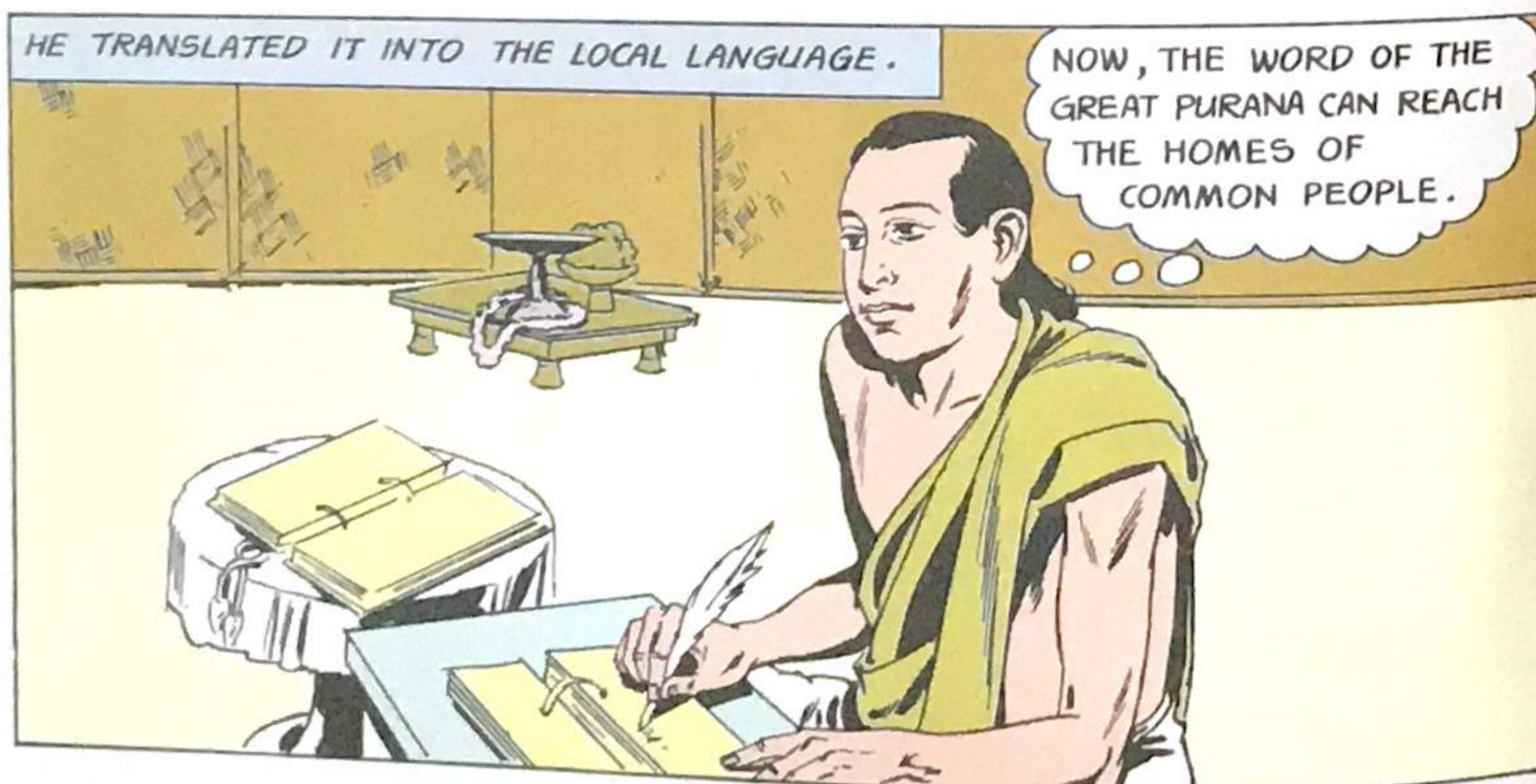




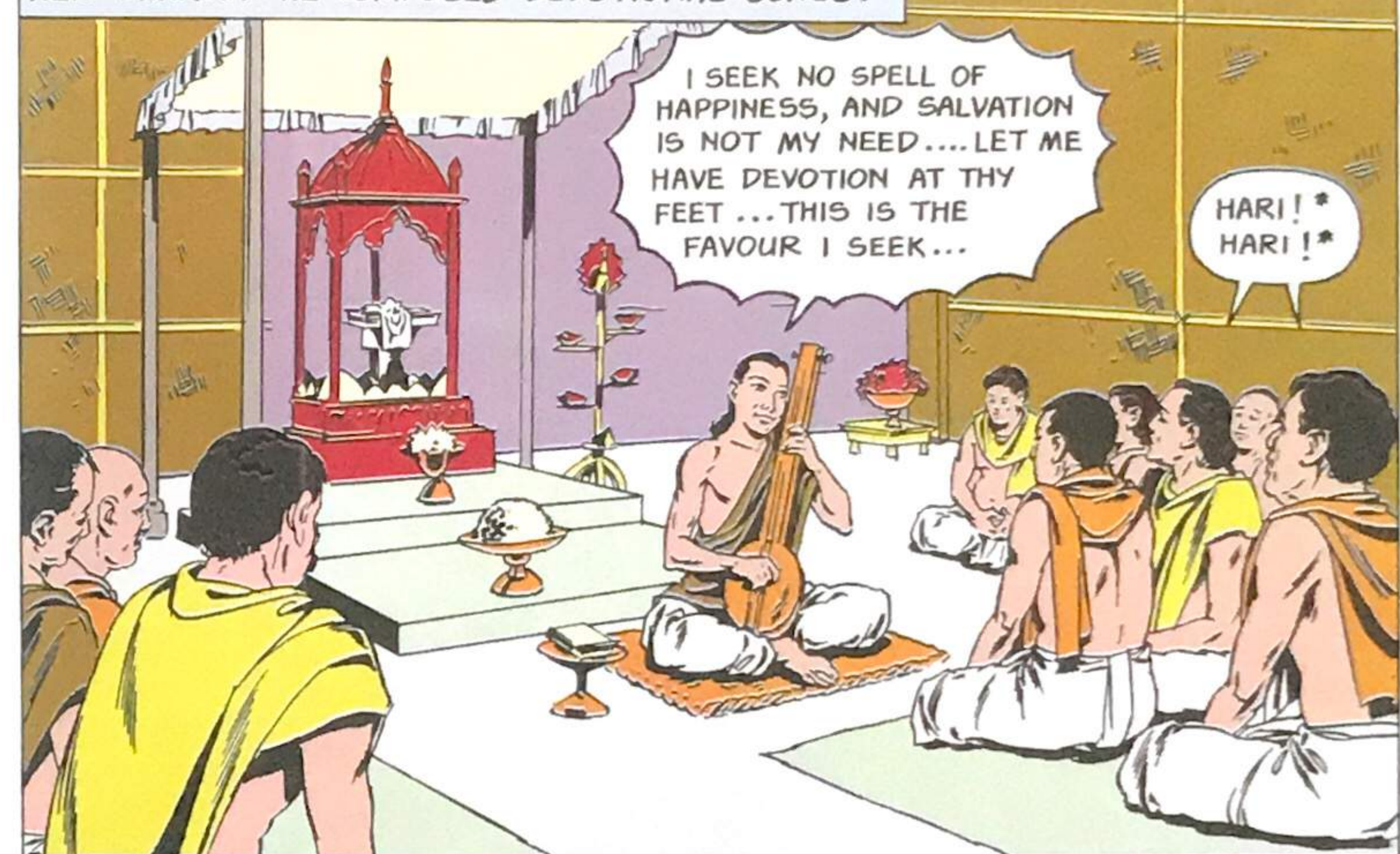
SHANKAR DEV MADE THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAWAT, THE BASIS OF HIS DHARMA AND THE WORK, THE DEITY.



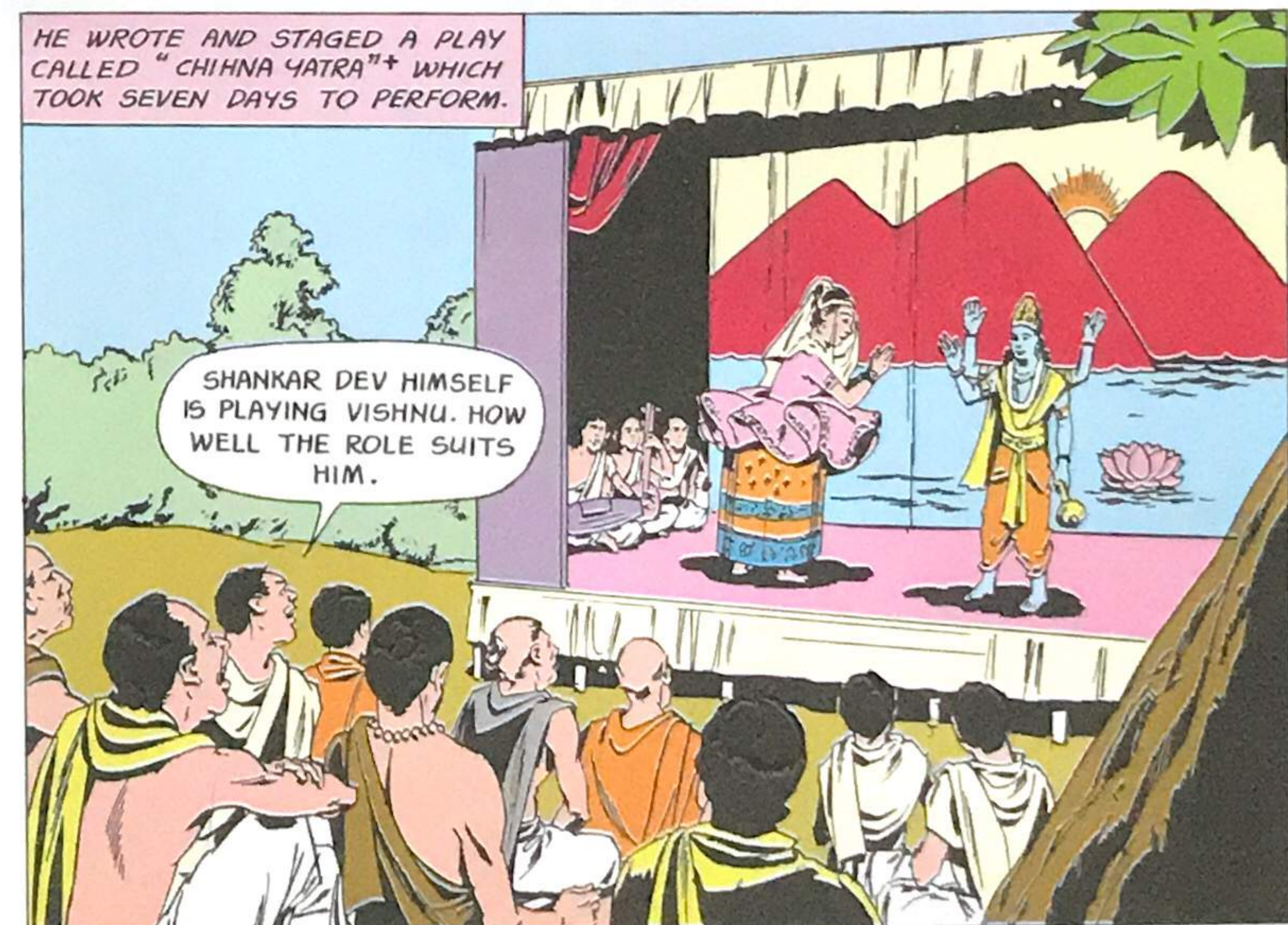
HE TRANSLATED IT INTO THE LOCAL LANGUAGE.



HIS POETIC GENIUS BLOSSOMED. IT BECAME HIS MEDIUM FOR PROPAGATING THE NEW DHARMA. HE COMPOSED DEVOTIONAL SONGS.



HE WROTE AND STAGED A PLAY CALLED "CHIHNA YATRA"† WHICH TOOK SEVEN DAYS TO PERFORM.



\* ANOTHER NAME FOR VISHNU † DRAMA WITH PAINTINGS



NEVER BEFORE HAD A PLAY WITH DANCE, MUSIC AND BACK-DROPS, BEEN ENACTED. THE PEOPLE FELT AS IF THEY HAD BEEN TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER REALM.



I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE!

I SHALL GO TO THE NAMGHAR EVERY DAY TO HEAR SHANKAR DEV.

KACHARI \*AND MIRI \* GARO \*AND KHASI \*ALL FLOCKED TO THE NAMGHARS TO HEAR THE VERSATILE PREACHER.

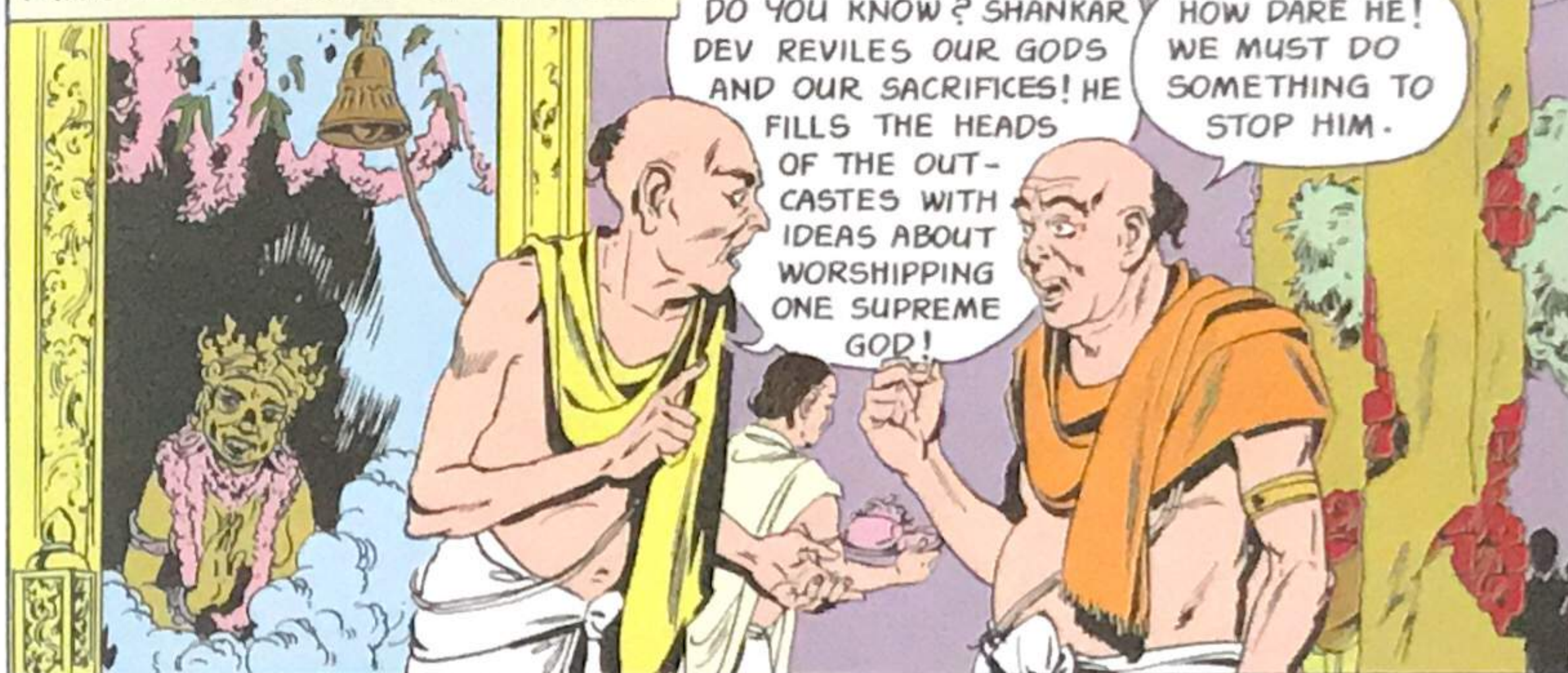


COME, MY BROTHERS. WE ARE ALL EQUAL IN THE EYES OF THE ONE GOD. COME AS KRISHNA'S DEVOTEES.

WHY DO YOU HESITATE? COME IN. THIS TEMPLE IS OPEN TO ALL.

\* NAME OF A TRIBE

BUT EVERY GREAT MOVEMENT INVARIABLY FACES OPPOSITION. THE PRIESTS OF VARIOUS CULTS WERE UP IN ARMS.



DO YOU KNOW? SHANKAR DEV REVILES OUR GODS AND OUR SACRIFICES! HE FILLS THE HEADS OF THE OUT-CASTES WITH IDEAS ABOUT WORSHIPPING ONE SUPREME GOD!

HOW DARE HE! WE MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP HIM.

THE VAISHNAVAS BEGAN TO BE HARASSED. THEY WERE STONED ON THE STREETS AND ABUSED.

FORGIVE THEM. THEY DID IT THROUGH IGNORANCE.

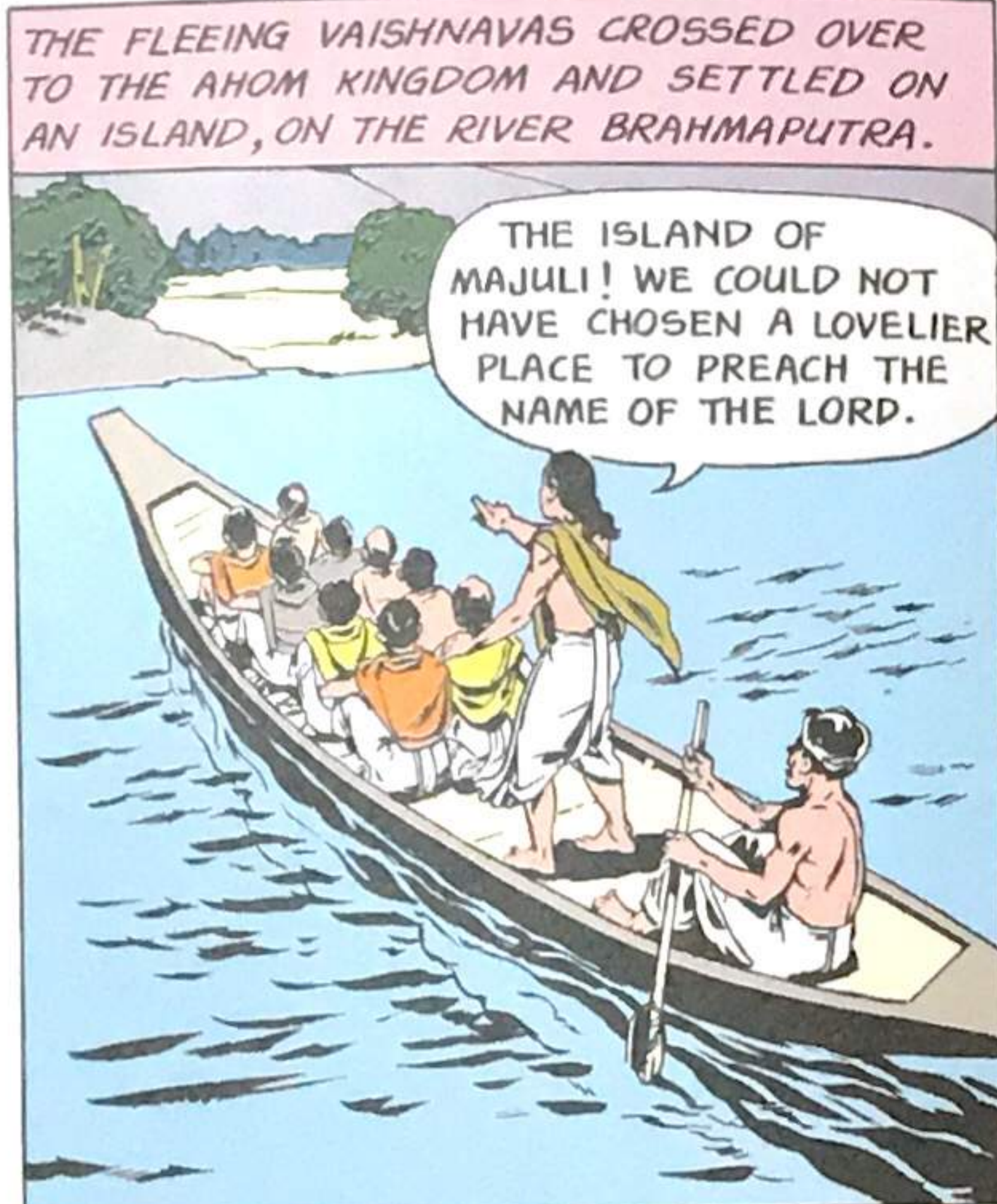


THE PRIESTS ALSO MANAGED TO TURN THE KACHARI KING AGAINST SHANKAR DEV AND THE VAISHNAVAS.

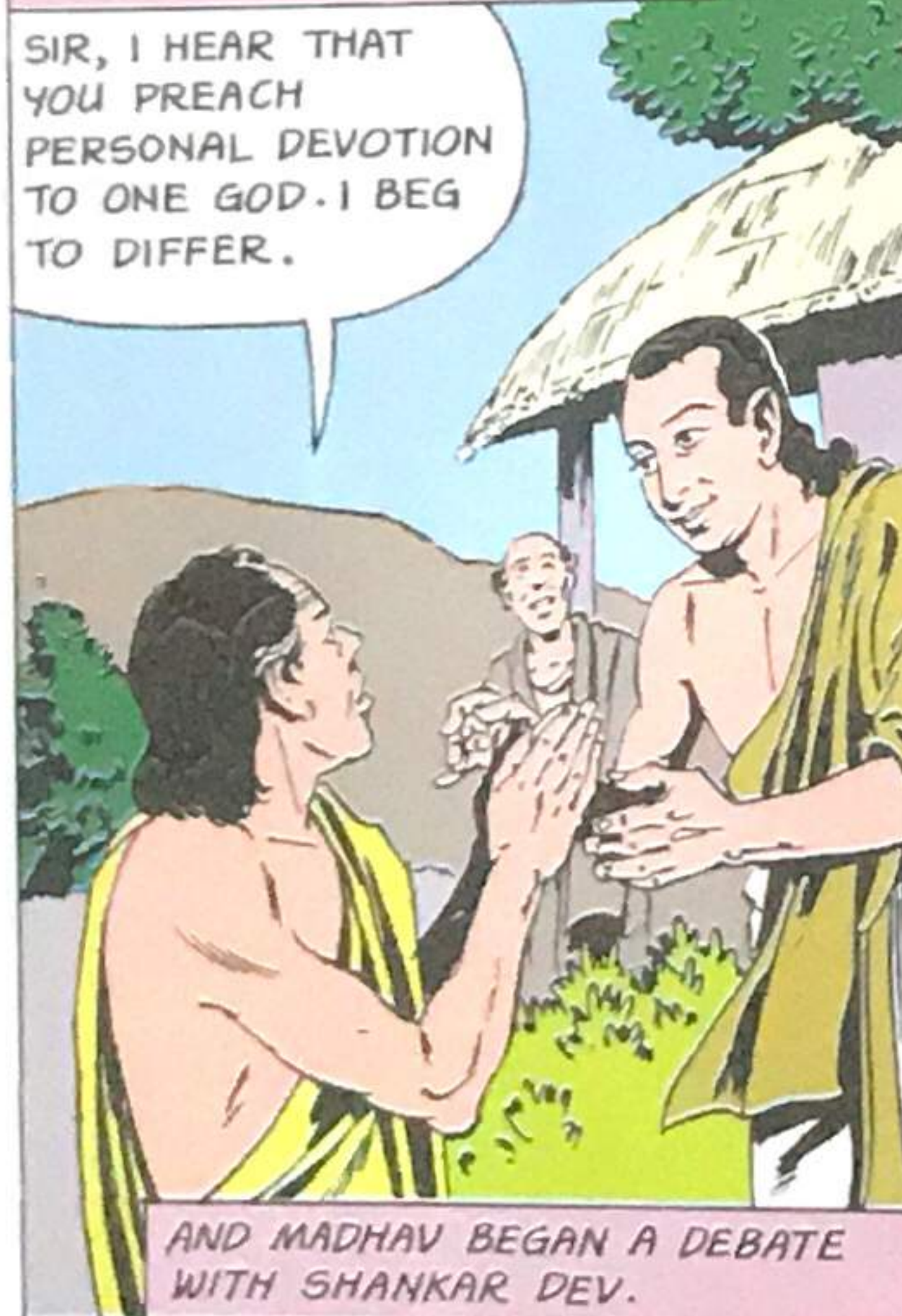
GURUDEV, THE KING IS OUT TO ATTACK US! WHAT SHALL WE DO?



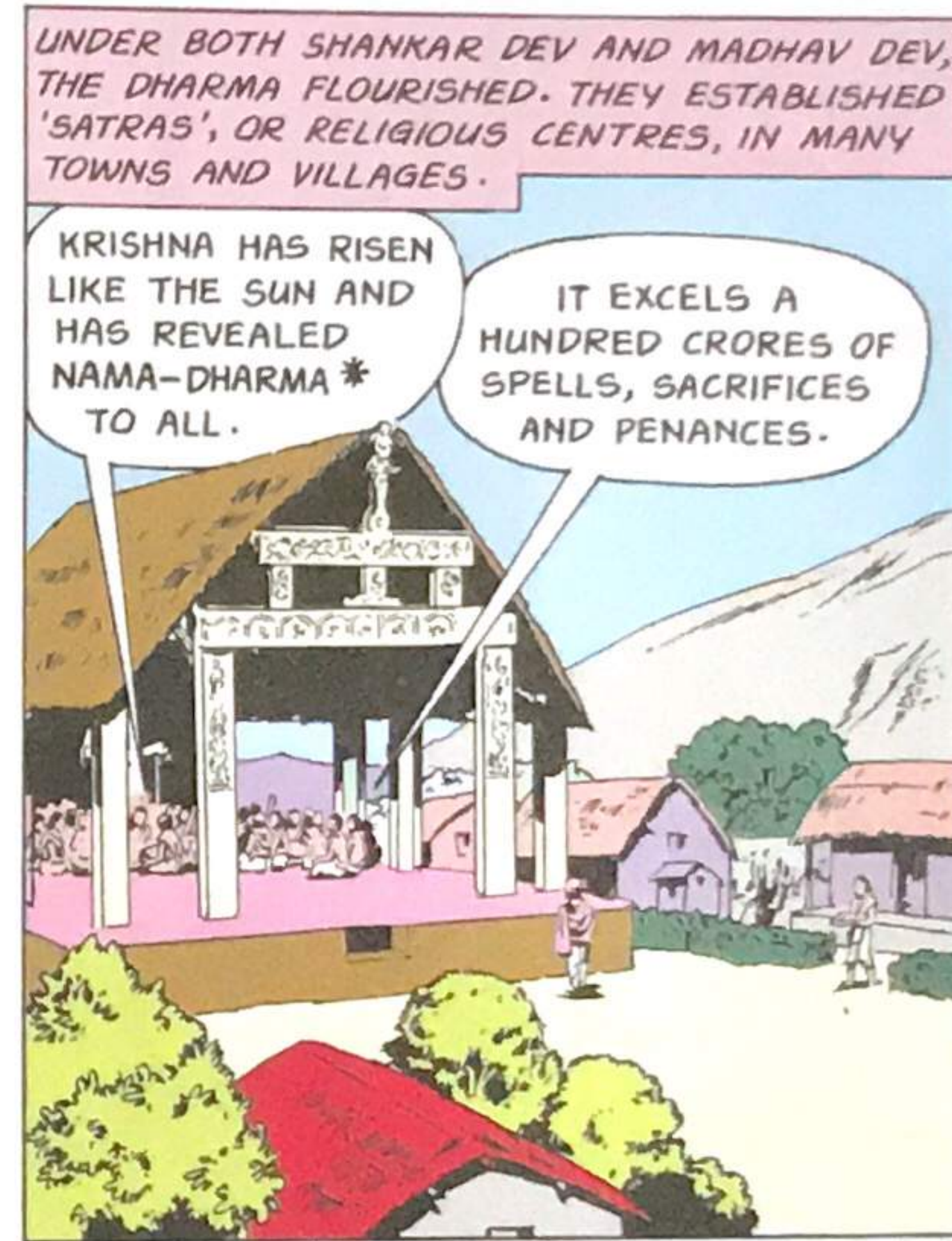
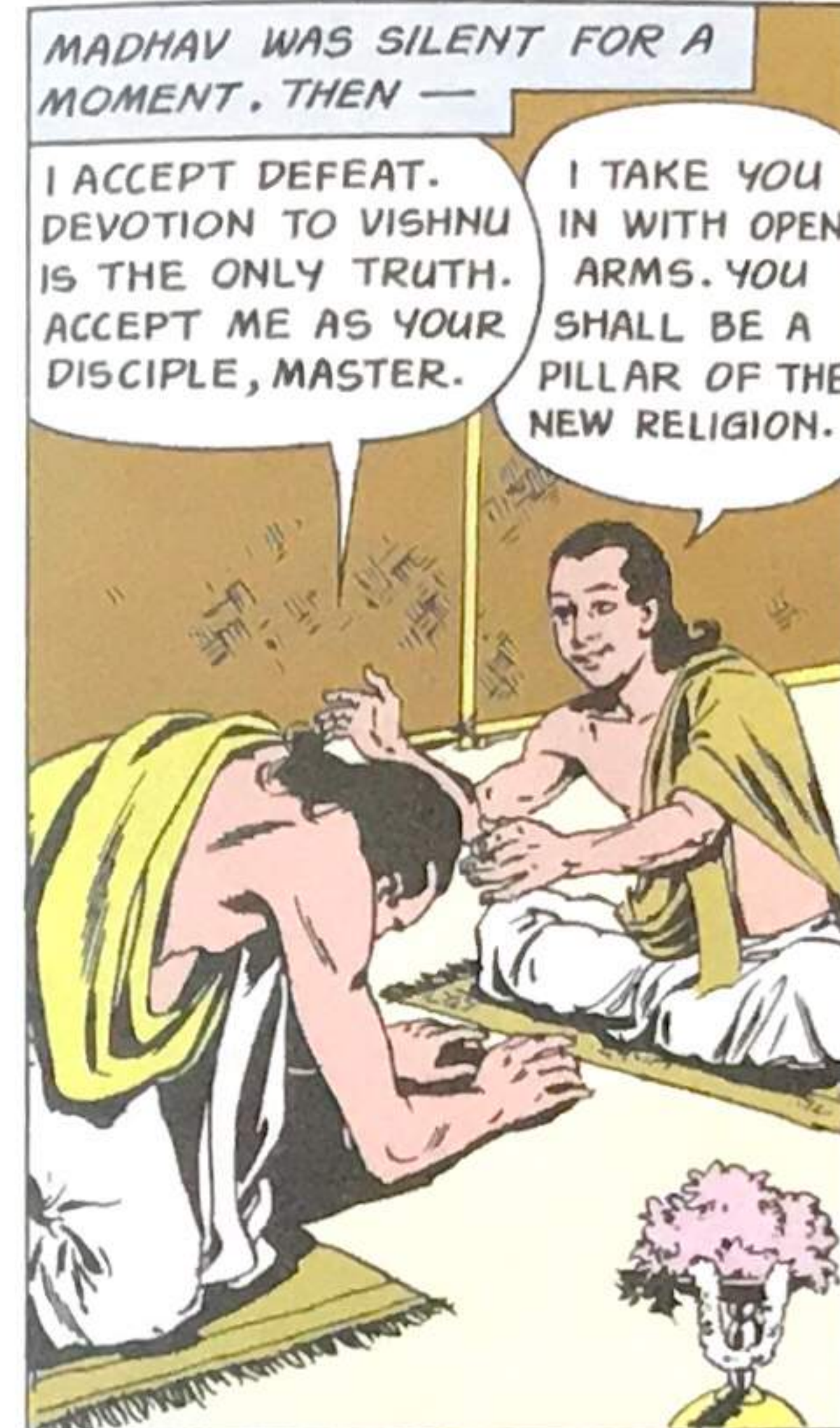
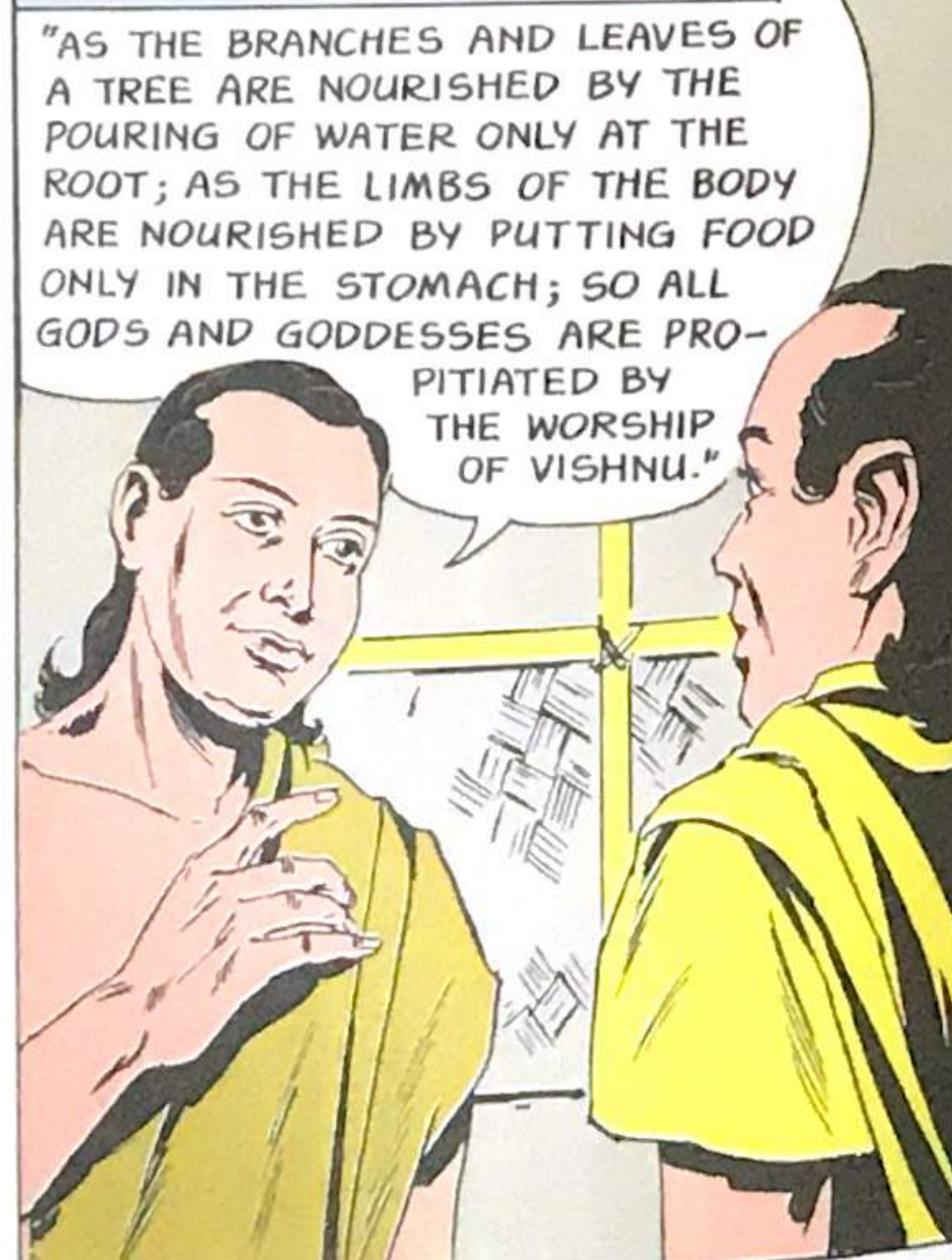




AT THE TOWN OF DHUWAHAT IN MAJULI, A MAN NAMED MADHAV DEV CAME TO SEE SHANKAR DEV.



THEY ARGUED FOR OVER FOUR HOURS. FINALLY, SHANKAR DEV QUOTED A LINE FROM THE BHAGAWAT PURANA.

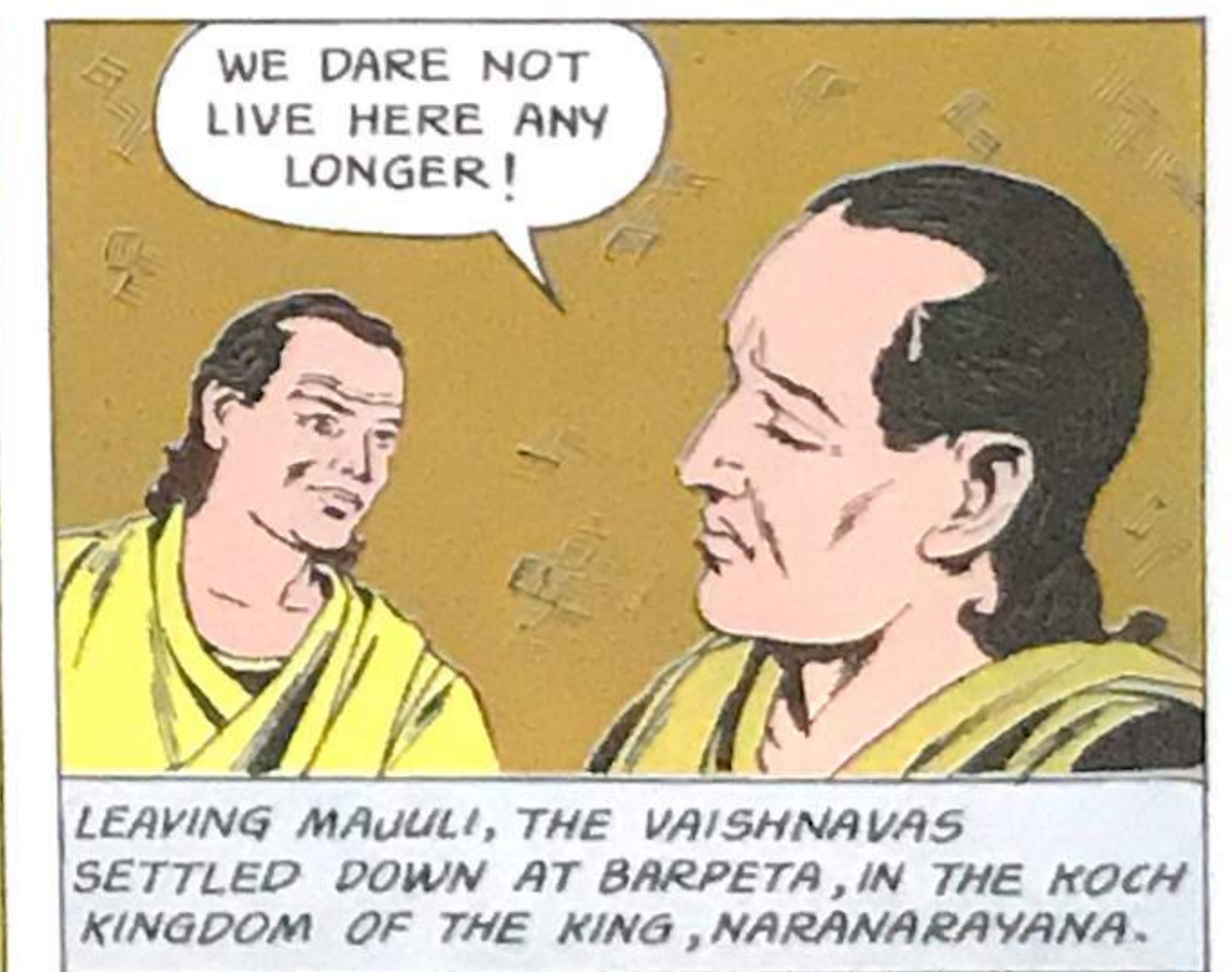
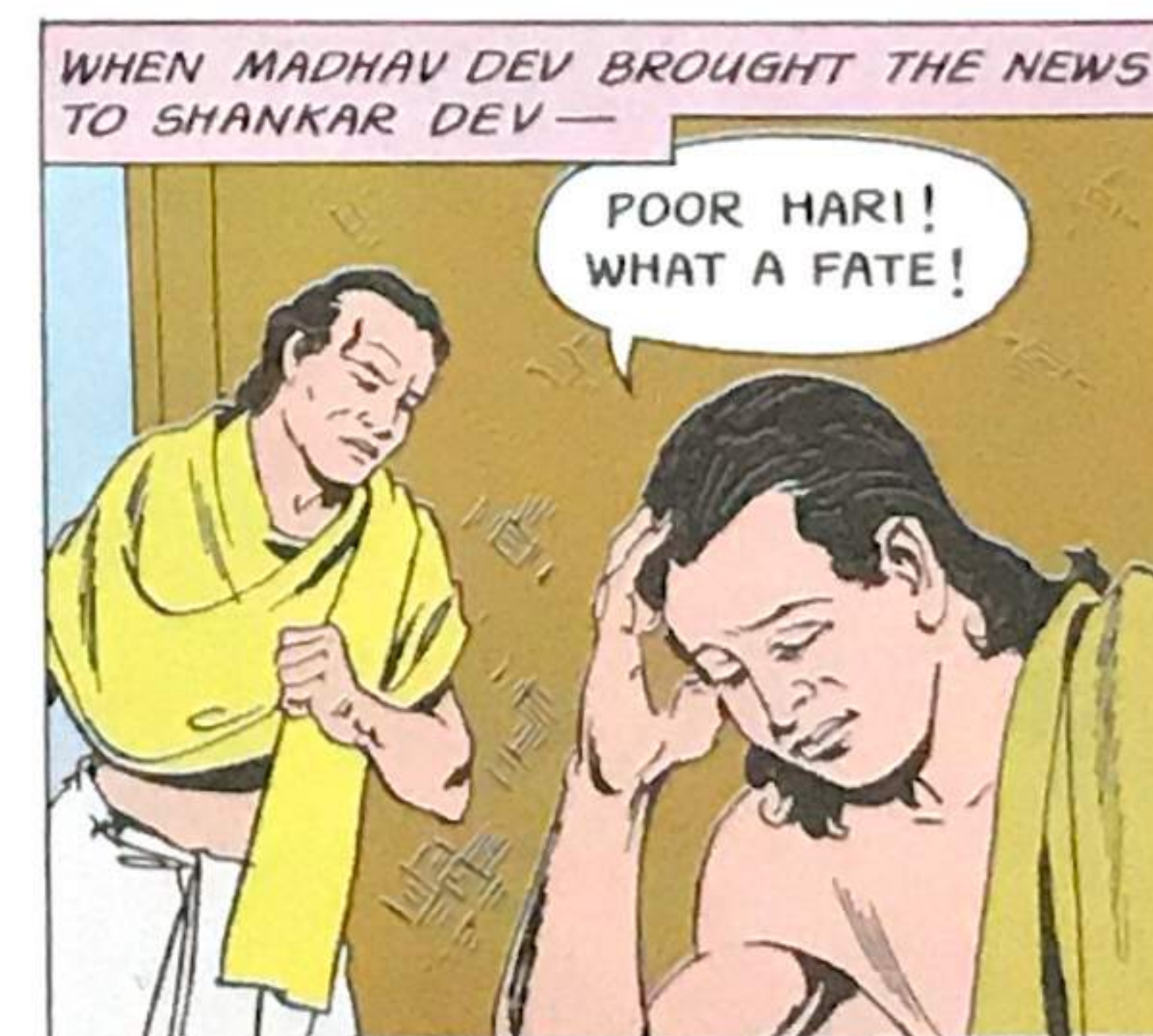
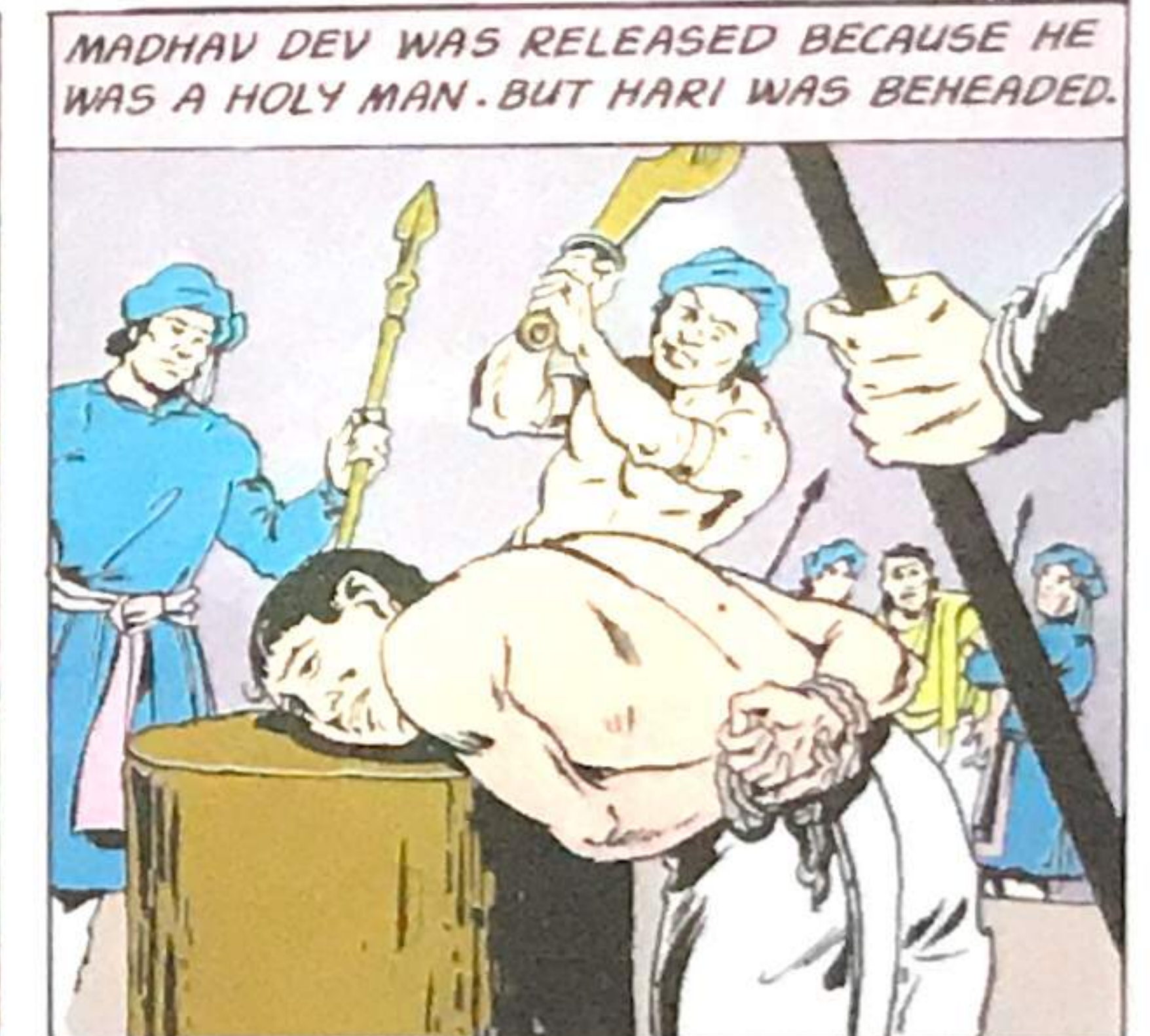
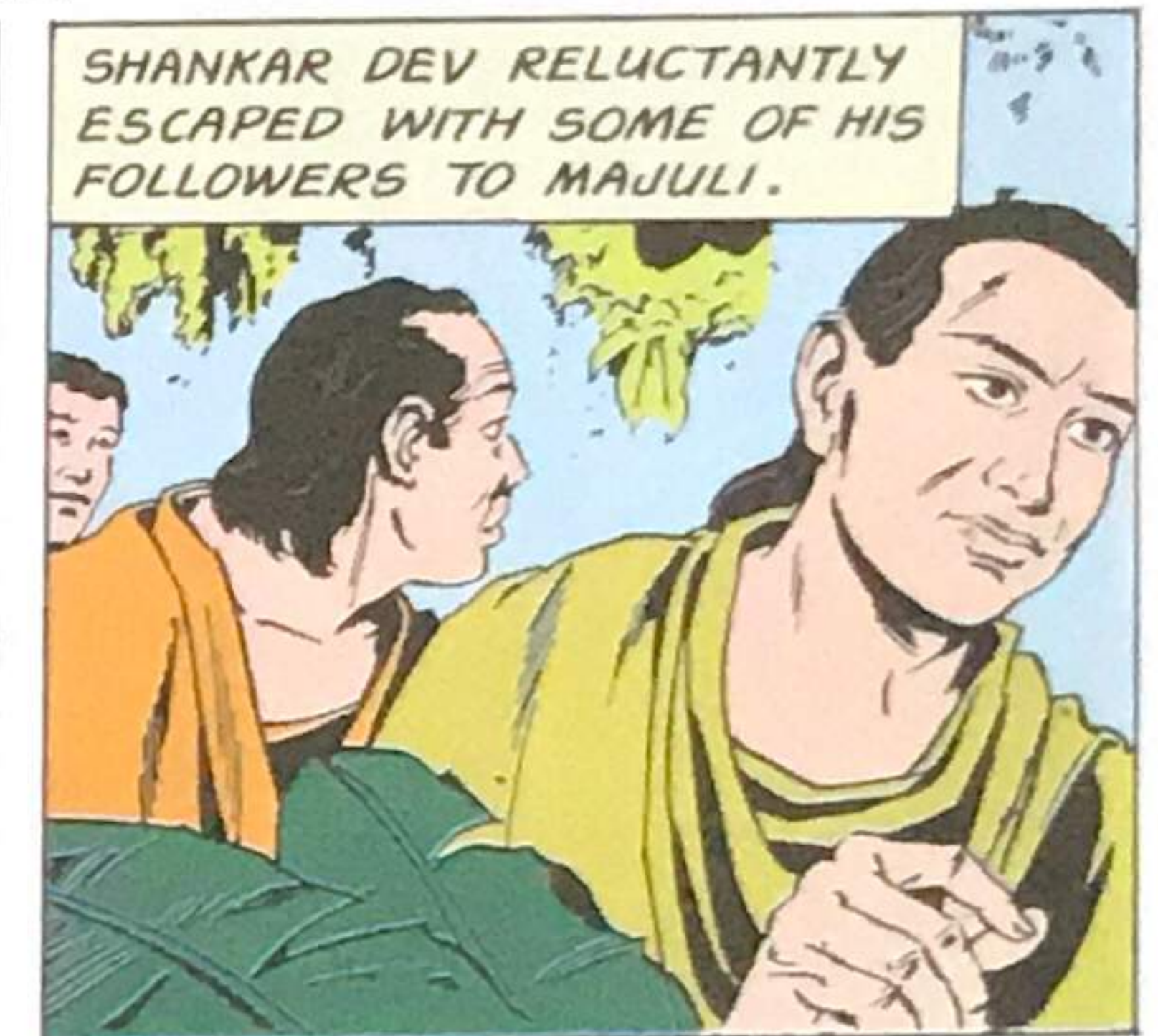
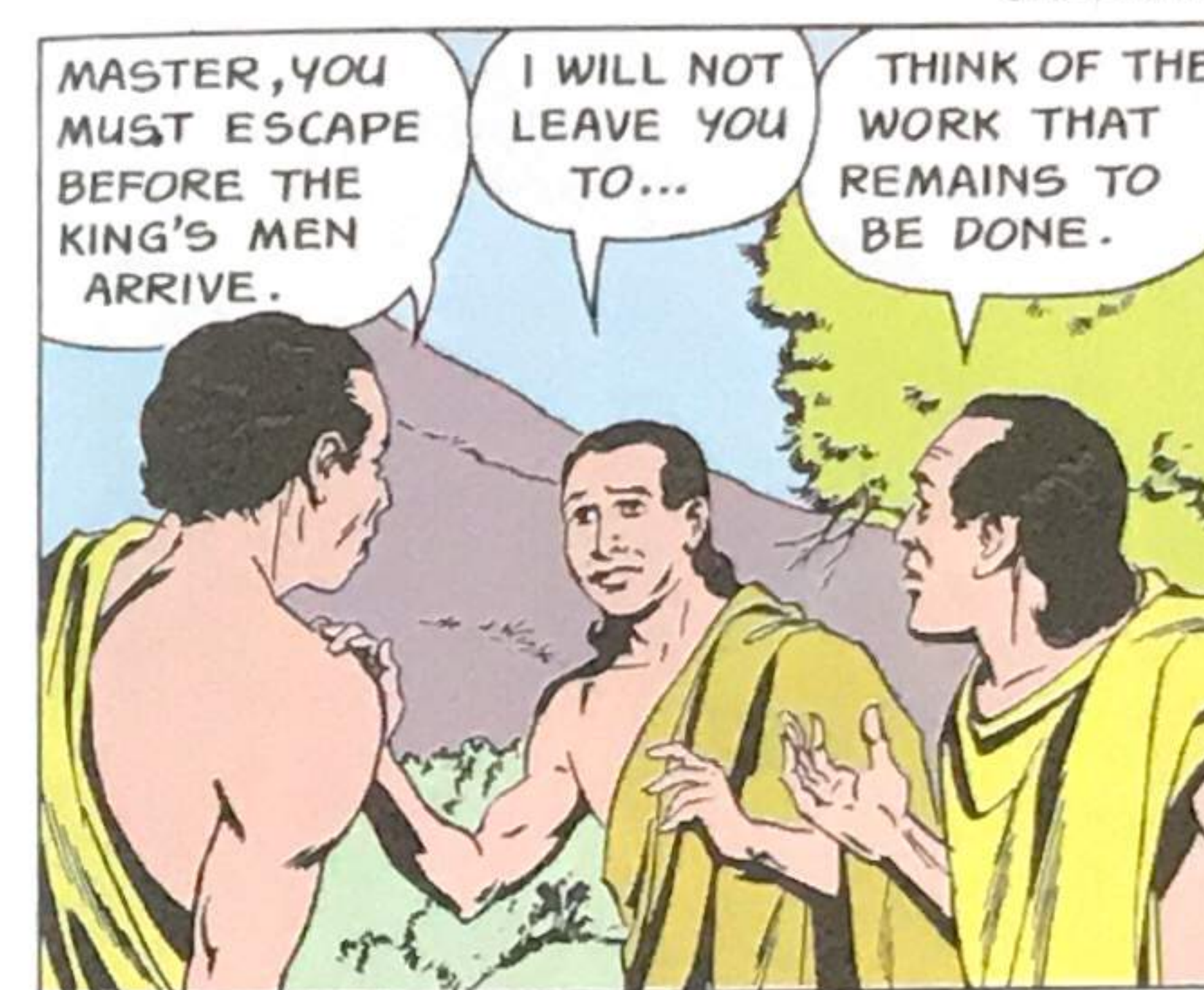
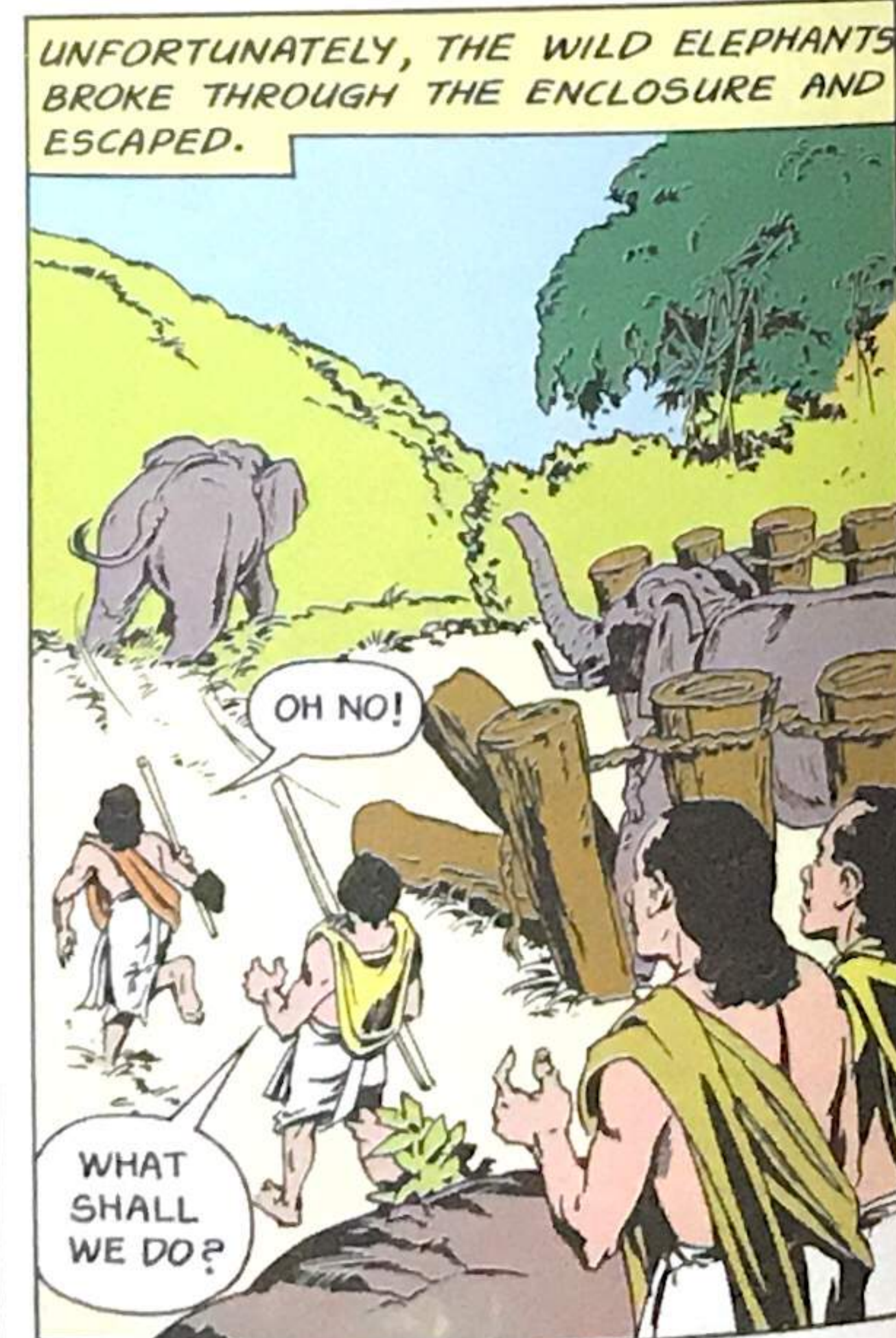
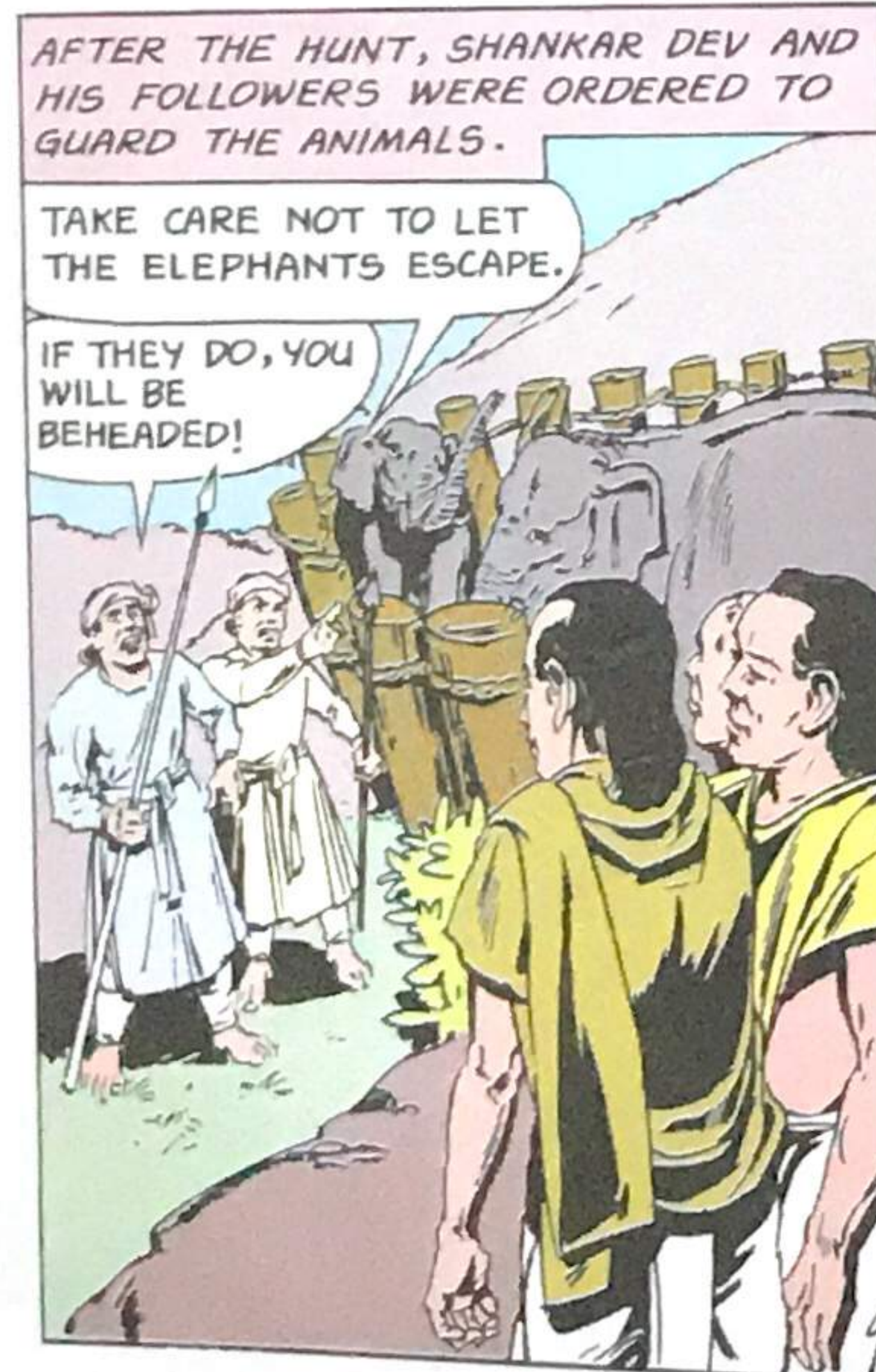
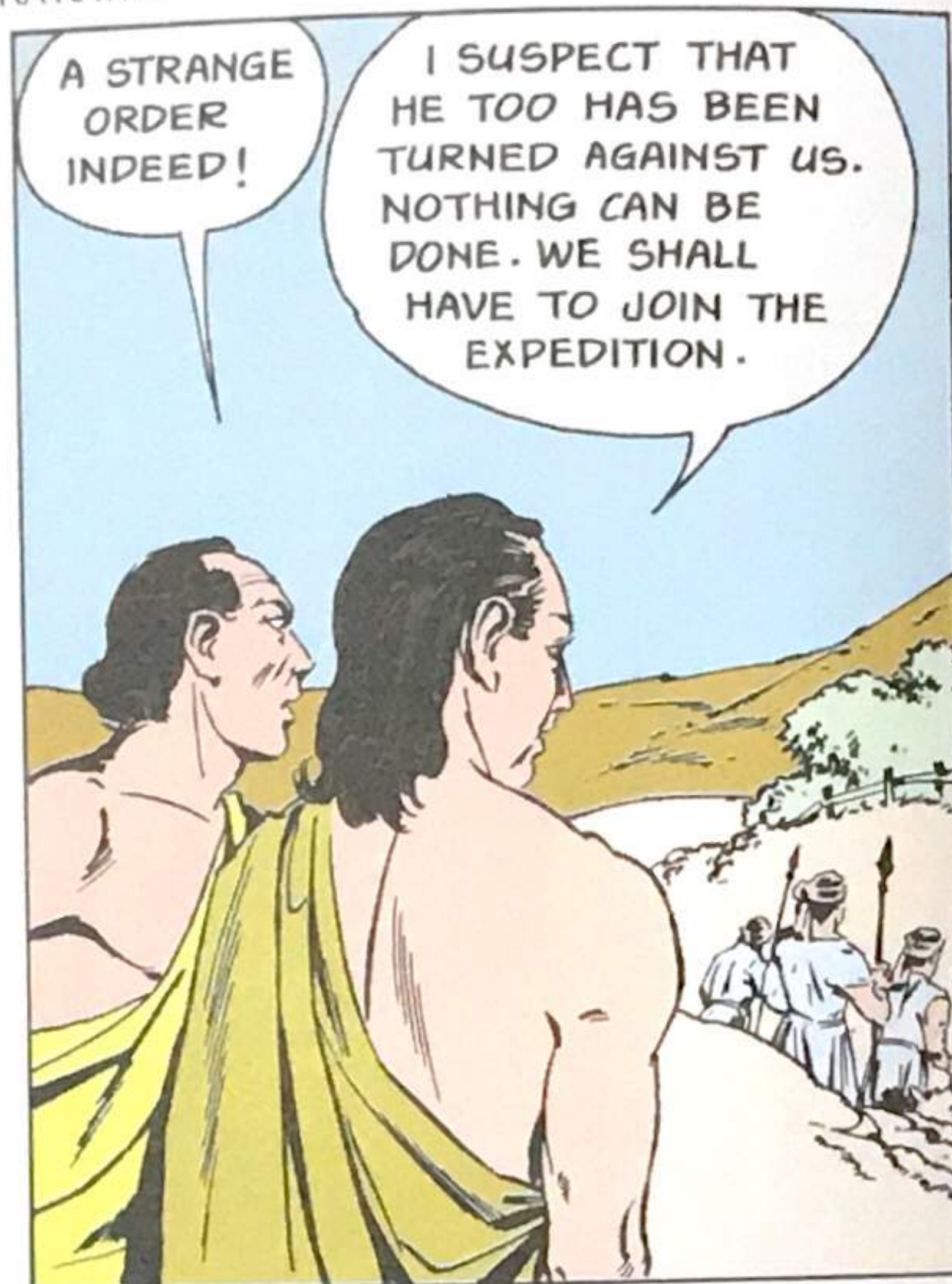
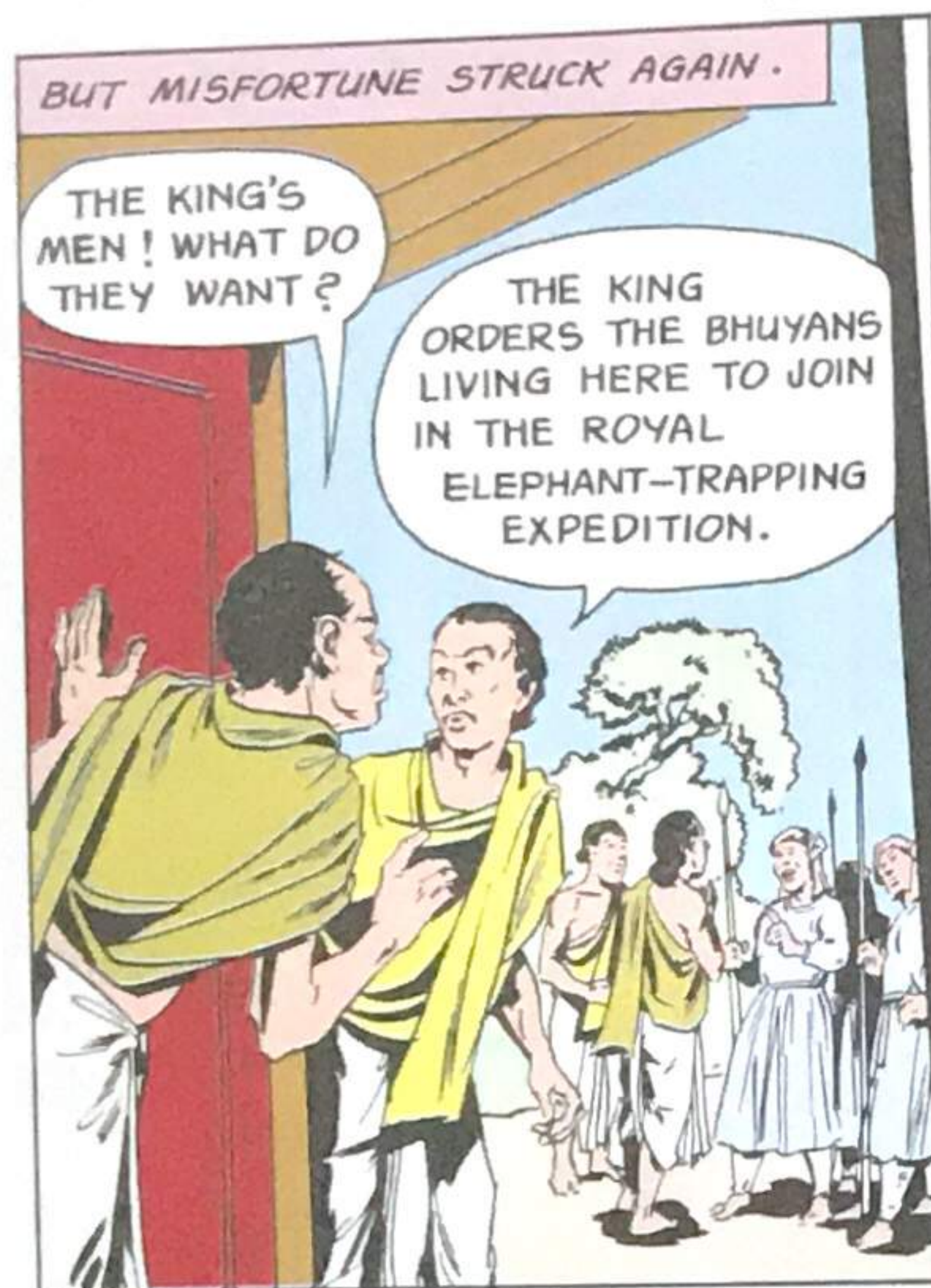


SHANKAR DEV'S COLOURFUL PLAYS AND MELODIOUS SONGS STIRRED THE HEARTS OF THE DEVOTEES.



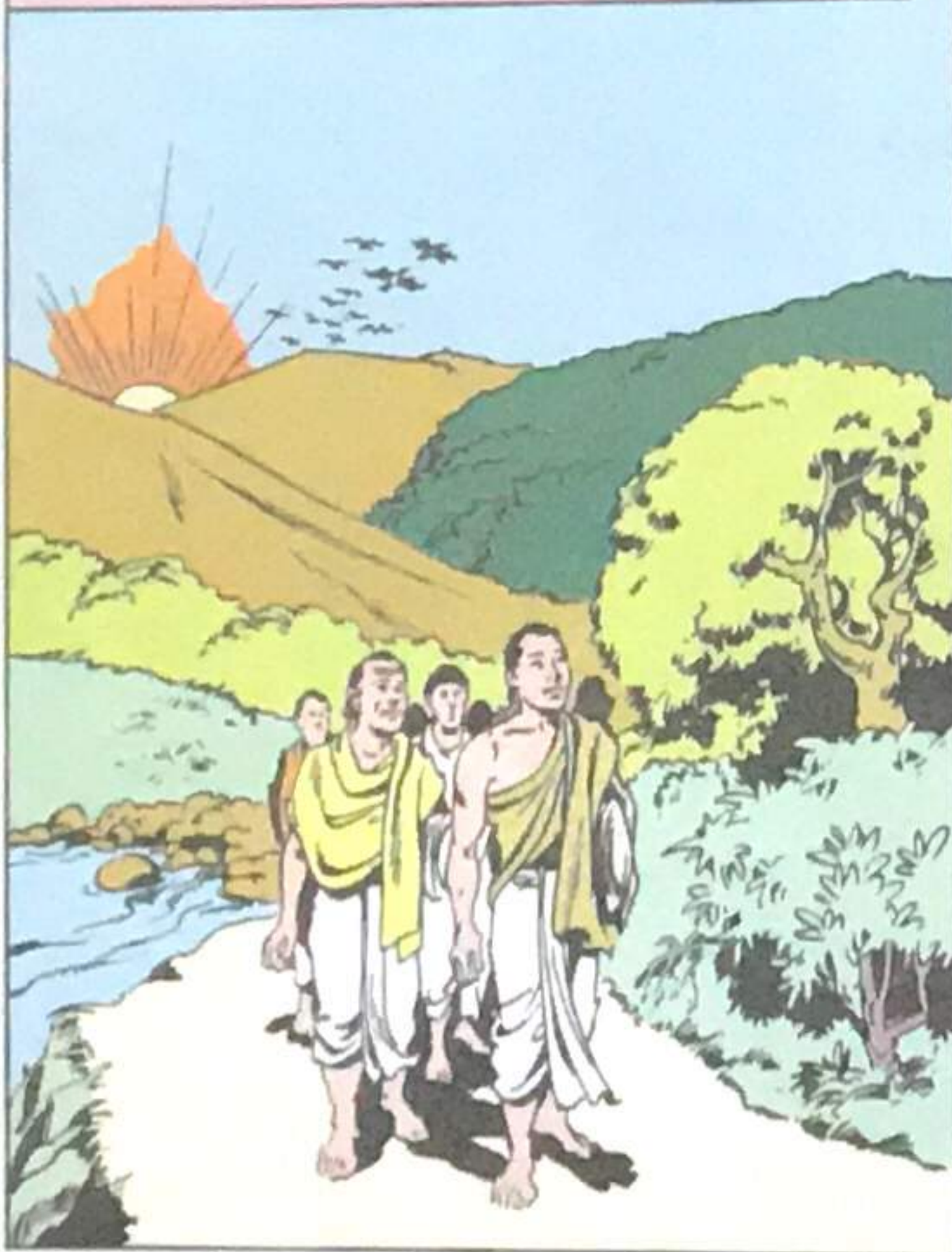
\* A FAITH WHERE CHANTING THE LORD'S NAME IS ENOUGH TO ATTAIN SALVATION







FROM BARPETA, SHANKAR DEV ALONG WITH A FEW OF HIS FOLLOWERS SET OUT ON A SECOND PILGRIMAGE.



ON THEIR WAY, WHILE PASSING THROUGH A JUNGLE, THEY SAW A DEER CAUGHT IN A HUNTER'S TRAP.



POOR THING! HOW IT STRUGGLES! RELEASE IT.



BUT WE HAVE DEPRIVED THE HUNTER OF HIS FOOD. I'LL LEAVE THIS COIN HERE - FOR HIM TO BUY FOOD FOR HIS FAMILY.

OUR GURUDEV TRULY HAS COMPASSION FOR ALL LIVING BEINGS.



WHEN SHANKAR DEV RETURNED TO BARPETA AFTER COMPLETING HIS SECOND PILGRIMAGE OF BHARATVARSHA,† HE FOUND THAT THE NAMGHARS WERE FULL.

IT IS GOOD TO SEE THAT SO MANY MORE HAVE EMBRACED THE DHARMA.

IT IS ONLY NATURAL, SRIMANTA\* THE EKASHARANA DHARMA IS LIKE A REFRESHING FOUNTAIN WHERE ALL TRAVELLERS MAY QUENCH THEIR THIRST.



BUT THE ORTHODOX PEOPLE OF BARPETA BEGAN TO POISON THE MINDS OF KING NARANARAYANA AND THE CROWN PRINCE, CHILARAYA, AGAINST SHANKAR DEV.



YOUR MAJESTY, THIS SHANKAR DEV IS BENT ON BREAKING ALL THE RELIGIOUS LAWS OF THE KINGDOM. HE IS A DANGEROUS MAN.

ALL RIGHT. SUMMON HIM TO COURT. LET HIM ANSWER YOUR CHARGES HIMSELF.

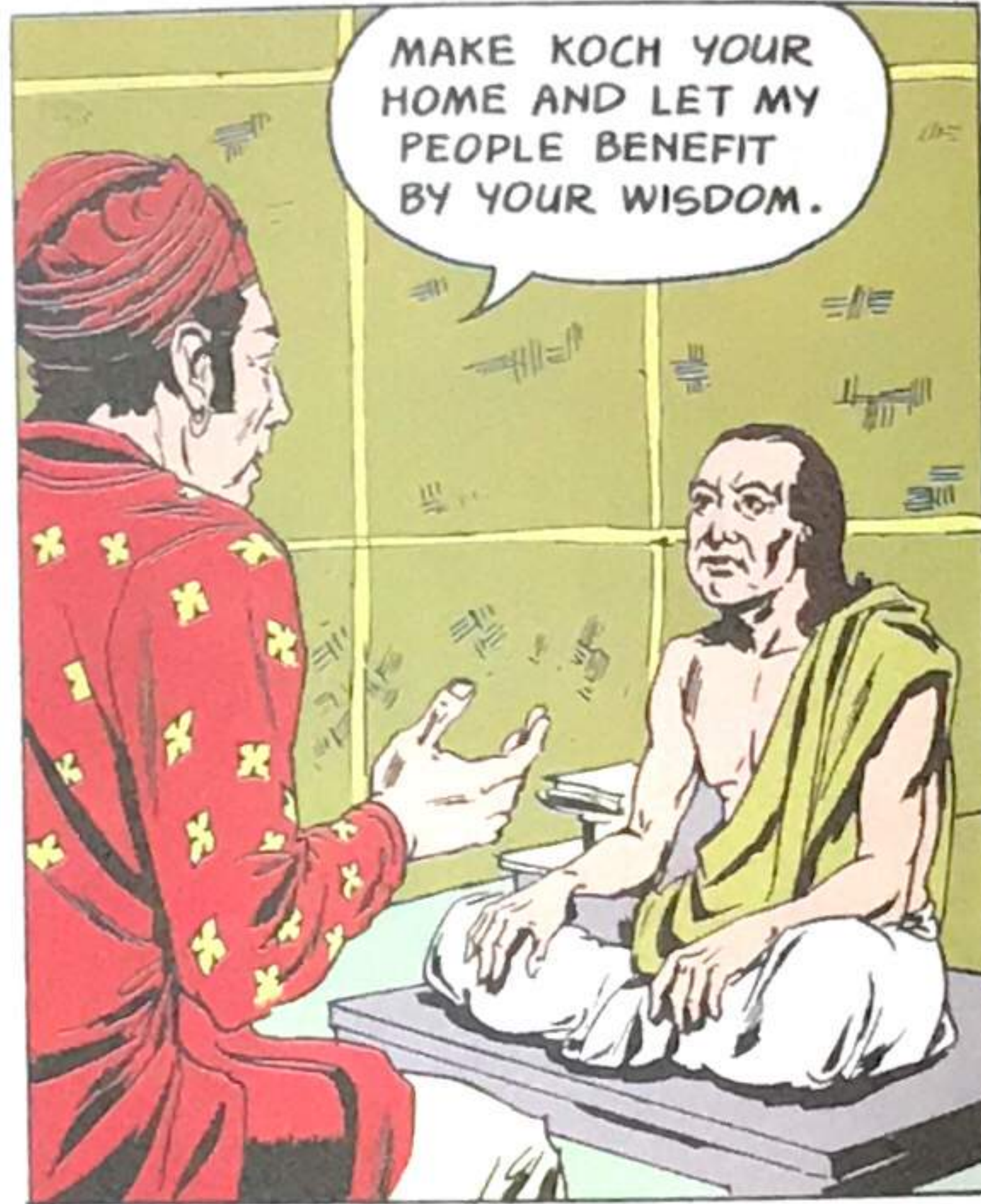
SHANKAR DEV CAME TO COURT AND ANSWERED THEIR CHARGES WITH ALL HUMILITY.



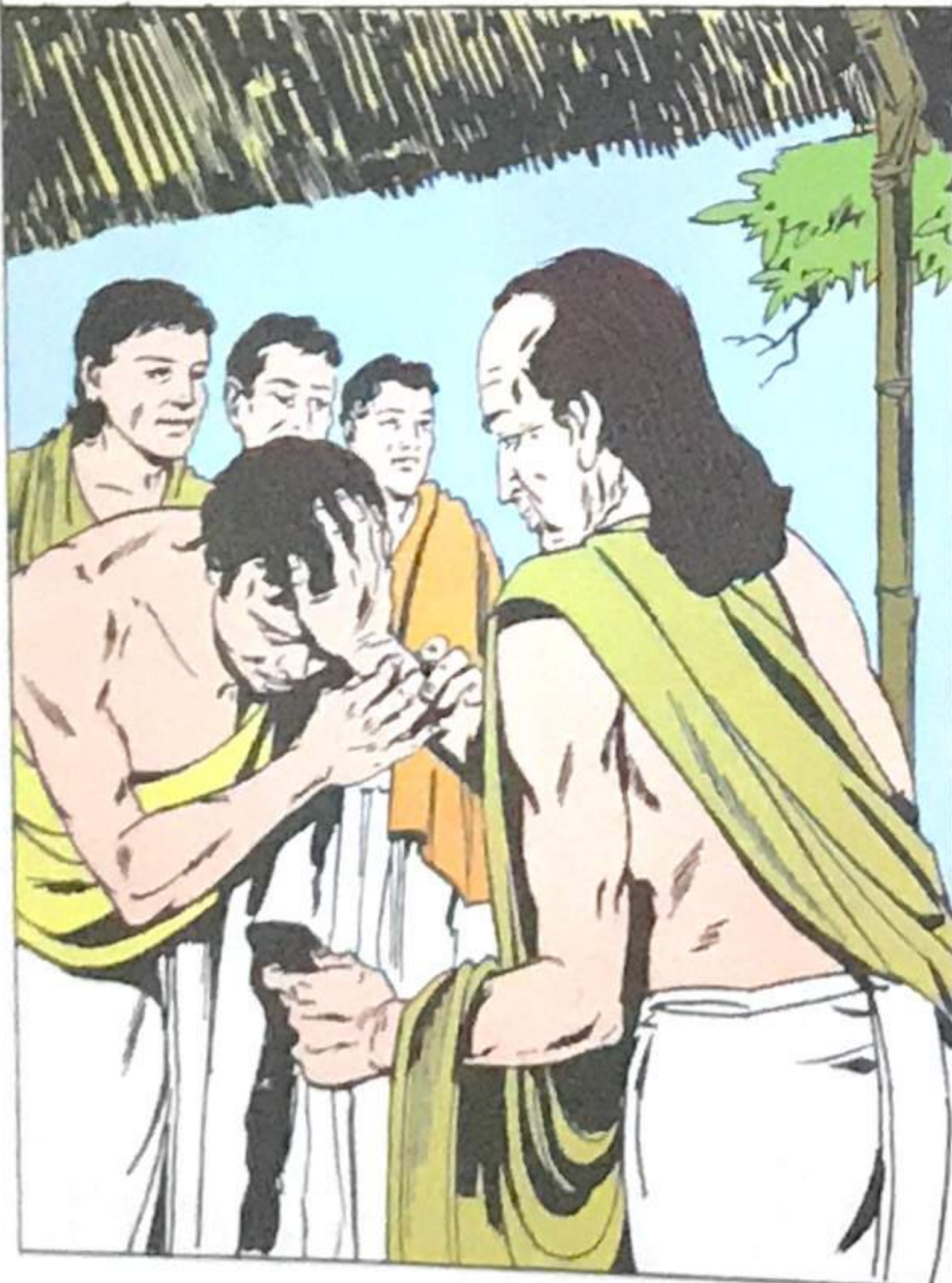
WHAT KIND OF A HOLY MAN ARE YOU? YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A SPIRITUAL GURU.

LORD JAGANNATH IS MY GURU. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?

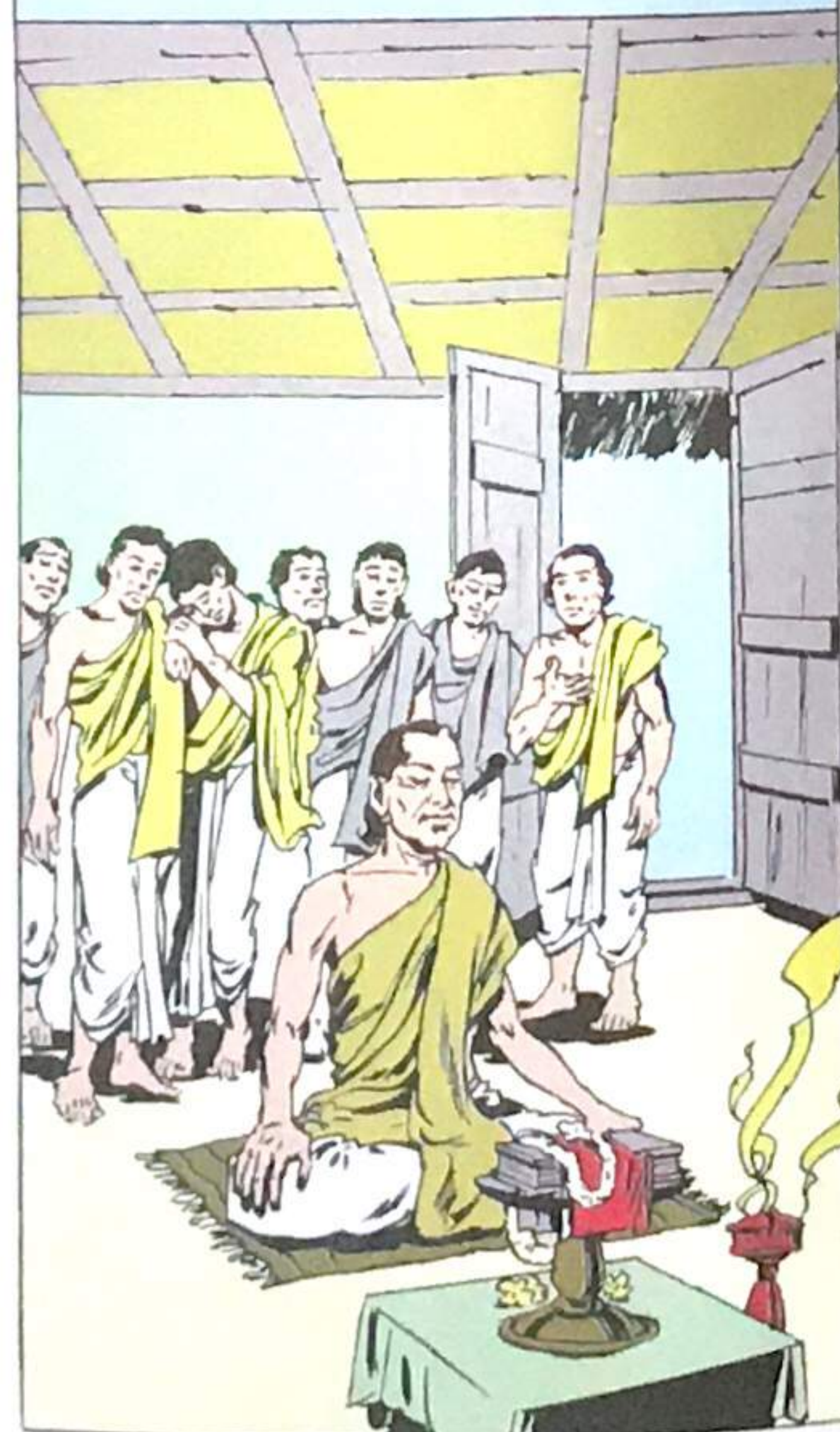




FROM THEN ON SHANKAR DEV SPENT MANY PEACEFUL YEARS IN THE KOCH KINGDOM. WHEN HE WAS 120 YEARS OLD HE NOMINATED MADHAV DEV AS HIS SUCCESSOR...



...AND GAVE UP HIS MORTAL BODY.



राम ब्रह्म व्यापक जगजाना।  
परमानंद परेस पुराना॥



# Tulsidas' Rām Chārīt Mānās

It brought Ramayana to the masses



Read the story in Amar Chitra Katha